THE Dreamcast ENCYCLOPEDIA

Every Game Released for the Sega Dreamcast

THE UNOFFICIAL GUIDE

INCLUDES EVERY JAPANESE GAME

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To Mum and Dad: I was 16 when this console came out, so thanks for making sure I stuck in at school and didn't stray off and become a wee ned. Oh, and thanks to Mum for being understanding when I decided to quit my Toys R Us job on the first day when it turned out they weren't going to let me sell video games or Star Wars Episode I figures at all, and wanted me to build bikes instead.

To my wee brother Kevin: we didn't really play the Dreamcast that much together because we were still obsessed with No Mercy on the N64, but I'm never not going to dedicate a book to you because you were such a massive part of my childhood and in shaping my life that I'll dedicate anything I can to you. Cheers bold yin.

To my wonderful wife Louise: thank you so much for continually nodding your head and saying 'mmm-hmm' each time I promised you I had this whole book-writing process down to a science now, even as it was clear that it was the sort of science that ends with big acid explosions and faces peeling off and stuff. You supported me as I continued to struggle through, and I love you for it. Next time I'll get it, honest.

And finally, last but not least, to my beautiful daughter Serena. Even though you're only four, you've already filled my heart with a lifetime's worth of love. I would happily watch you catch fish in Disney Dreamlight Valley all day than do anything else with anyone else (your mum aside, obviously). I'll always love you with every atom of energy in my body until I'm no longer here to be able to.

FOREWORD

My Dreamcast is still with me now, plugged into HDMI (1) via a type of cable that didn't exist when it first came out. It's chugging a little when loading, like the 20-year-old barn find machine it is – further enhancing the pop-up of Crazy Taxi's flouro city – but boy, are we ever having fun. Still. By the bucket. These fun stains are never coming out of the carpet.

I'm not gesticulating at you through the yellowing lens of retro gaming, either. I'm playing Dreamcast with my very own 12-year-old son, who is routinely amazed by the joys of a console long discontinued. The games are new to him and, incredibly, as good as new to me too. I'm gawping at Rez in amazement at a game that still resembles an AI battle simulation from the future, staying up too late for a man of my age with Space Channel 5, wondering if I was always this bad at Ikaruga or if it's merely a symptom of cognitive decline; or maybe the mice got at the controller wire during the sad, empty years when the Dreamcast was packed away and that's why I'm still on level one.

These games have not aged, I swear to God. The vibrancy and style of 90s Sega transcends time. If you told me Ferrari F355 was new, programmed last year for a £500 super console you can only buy from main branches of Currys on a Wednesday, I'd believe it. Is Jet Set Radio 'coming soon' to PCs that cost more than my car? Looks like it. Every time a newly rediscovered and wiped-down Dreamcast disc goes into the tray and our crossed-fingers successfully will it to actually load, a staggering new world emerges and we can barely believe it. Shenmue. Chu Chu Rocket! Phantasy Star Online. Sonic Adventure. Samba de Amigo. Metropolis Street Racer. All milestones along the road that led to here, today.

Also, inconceivably in today's environment, all these S-rank games launched in the UK during the short 18-month window straddling the turn off the millennium within which the console was officially supported by Sega. Dreamcast was the light that burned at least three times as bright for around only a quarter as long as usual for a home console, but shall forever be remembered by those who lived it as home to a disproportionately large percentage of the best games ever.

If you missed out on Dreamcast at the time because your peers suggested waiting for a rival machine or your parents messed up and you erroneously failed to be born in time to fully enjoy the late 1990s, all is not lost. You don't have to pretend to like these retro games, or sympathetically imagine that they were maybe considered good at the time to the less evolved and discerning gamers of the day. The best Dreamcast games are as good as the best of now, and as beautiful and alive as they were 20 years ago, when the tail-end of Sega's home and arcade development teams distilled all their lessons into one box and a few precious discs for a last mass hurrah on the company's final console.

Dreamcast was robbed of a longer and more storied life, but just look at what it did in such a short period of time against crippling odds. You take all the time you need to load, old friend, I know it'll be worth the wait.

Gary Cutlack
Sega fan and former video game journalist

INTRODUCTION

I was 16 years old when the Dreamcast launched in the UK. In a way, it was the perfect time for it to arrive. At that age I was enjoying my newfound independence, getting to go out with my pals, and that invariably resulted in frequent trips to arcades to play the latest games. At the risk of sounding ancient, back in those days arcades had more than garbage ticket-spouting machines, and the latest arcade games always looked a million times better than what you could play at home. That changed with the Dreamcast.

I can still remember getting my console a week or two after launch (thanks to a delay by Simply Games: shopping online wasn't quite as seamless back in 1999) and being stunned by how great the demo for Ready 2 Rumble Boxing was. This for me was the Dreamcast's equivalent of the T-Rex tech demo on the original PlayStation, but this time it was an actual playable game, just as visually impressive as anything at my local arcade. Ever since the days of the Atari 2600 developers had been chasing that dream of replicating arcade quality at home, and suddenly it was possible (well, possible and affordable: the Neo Geo had previously offered arcade quality at home but cost a small fortune).

This became even clearer as the Naomi ports started to appear: because the Dreamcast used similar architecture to Sega's Naomi arcade boards, it was easy for developers to port over arcade games that felt like almost perfect recreations. One minute I was playing Crazy Taxi, The House of the Dead 2, Virtua Tennis and Virtua Striker 2 in the arcades, the next I was playing them in my bedroom. I can't stress enough how incredible this was at the time, and it's something many players take for granted these days now that all the best-looking games are found at home.

By the time I turned 18 and was ready to leave home to start university, I had my PS2. Naturally, that came with me to my tiny room in my student flat, but I also decided to bring my Dreamcast with me. I had the feeling that if I put it in the communal living room it would be a good way of making friends with my new university-chosen flatmates. Turns out I was right: the combination of its four controller ports and the fact that so many of its games' arcade origins meant they were easy to quickly pick up and play (even when drunk) meant the Dreamcast became the main attraction in our flat. We pulled so many all-nighters playing Danger Tennis, a high-risk version of four-player Virtua Tennis where you played for so long that you had to keep hitting your partner to stop them falling asleep. All my previous consoles are memorable for me because they were ways of bonding with my brother; the Dreamcast was memorable because, later in my life, it helped me bond with my new friends. The step up into adulthood was less scary for me (and probably them) because my Dreamcast gave us something comforting, a shared experience at a time when it was all too easy to feel alone.

This book is aimed at every Dreamcast owner, regardless of your own experience with Sega's final console. Maybe you regularly had friends over for Power Stone 2 battles, or perhaps you're one of the sadly few people who discovered and fell in love with the underrated majesty of Cannon Spike. Whether you're a long-time Dreamcast fan, a newcomer to the console, or just someone looking to add to their retro library by buying some old games (even Japanese ones), this book is for you. Every single game officially released for the console in every region is released here, so no matter how obscure that Japanese shoot 'em up import you loved, or how critically panned that ECW wrestling game for which you secretly had a soft spot was, you'll find it in this book.

As always, thank you so much for reading this book. If you enjoy it and haven't discovered any of my previous titles, there are encyclopedias already out for the NES, SNES, Mega Drive / Genesis and Nintendo 64, and they're more of the same (which I mean in the best way possible, of course). Please do contact me on Twitter @scully1888 (if it still exists by the time this book is out) or email me at chrisscullion1888@gmail.com and let me know what you think of the book, and please do review it online if you can: the more the word spreads, the more books I'll be able to make. For the sixth book, we'll be going a little further back in time: up to this point we've been solely looking at consoles, but next time we're going handheld. I hope to see you again next year for the Game Boy Encyclopedia.

With love,
Chris Scullion

THE HISTORY OF THE DREAMCAST

How do you recover from three flops in a row? Not a problem if you're a high jumper – it's literally your job – but if you're a video game hardware manufacturer, you need to find success eventually or something's going to have to give. This was the crisis faced by Sega as it found itself in third place in an industry where, just half a decade earlier, it was leading Nintendo in some regions and providing strong competition in others. Now, after selling only 2.24 million Mega CD / Sega CD add-ons for its Mega Drive / Genesis, then a fairly awful 800,000 32X add-ons, Sega was fighting a losing battle with the Saturn. It could excuse the Mega CD and 32X sales because those add-ons were always designed to simply prolong the Mega Drive's life while Sega worked on its next proper successor. But the Saturn was that successor, and following a disastrous 'surprise, it's out today' launch in the US that caught players off-guard and infuriated unsuspecting retailers, the console just never managed to find traction in the west and, with around 9.2 million units sold, ended up a distant third behind the Nintendo 64 (32.9 million) and the overwhelmingly dominant newcomer, the Sony PlayStation (102.4 million).

In mid-1997, with Sega owning just 12% of the console market, Sega of America president Bernie Stolar stated during the E3 games convention that 'the Saturn is not our future'. In March 1998, Sega of America then declared that it was discontinuing the Saturn less than three years into its life so it could focus on its next-generation console. It was a bold strategy that threatened to annoy even more people – the players who owned a Saturn, the developers who had Saturn games in development, the retailers with Saturn stock they still needed to sell – but Sega's plan was clear: get a big head-start on the next generation by releasing its next console long before Sony and Nintendo release theirs (the systems that would eventually become the PS2 and GameCube).

For its next system, Sega turned to IBM and asked it to work on a prototype for next generation console hardware. With the codename Black Belt, this prototype used graphics technology created by US company 3dfix Interactive. Unhappy to hear that Sega was potentially outsourcing its new console development to a US third party, Sega of Japan's head off hardware development Hideki Sata got his team to start work on a prototype of their own, codenamed Katana. Eventually, Sega would decide that Katana would be the prototype it would press ahead with, and after settling a potentially messy lawsuit with 3dfix (which claimed Sega had promised to use its tech and was now abandoning it), it was full speed ahead on the Saturn's successor. The console would also get a new name, Dreamcast: a name that conjured up visions of graphics so impressive they could only be imagined, as well as its online (i.e. broadcast) capabilities.

The Dreamcast was indeed a huge step up from the PlayStation, Saturn and Nintendo 64 in terms of power and performance. Depending on the situation the console was capable of delivering anything up to 6–7 million polygons per second, compared to 360,000 on the PlayStation, and could output at 480p, the highest resolution possible on a standard definition TV at the time. What's more, the console's processing power meant a lot more of its games ran at 60 frames per second, something that was rare when it came to polygonal games on the PlayStation, N64 and Saturn. In a clever move, Sega also decided to make it so that the Dreamcast's hardware would be architecturally similar to that of its Naomi arcade board. Although the Naomi had extra memory, this still meant that it was fairly easy for developers of Naomi-based arcade games to then port them to the Dreamcast, making the console an exceptional source of near arcade-quality games.

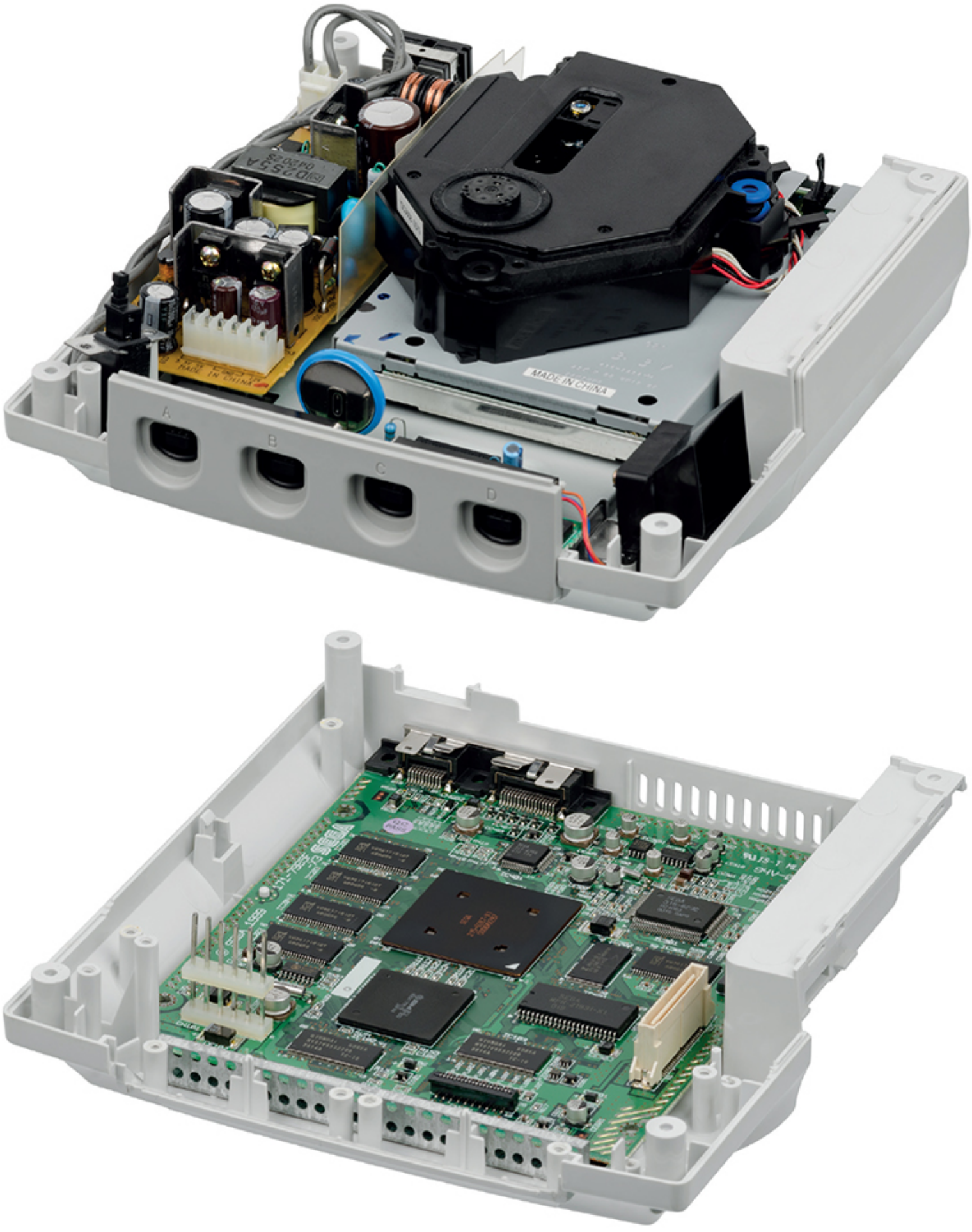
Having the most visually impressive graphics of any home console by far was one thing, but the Dreamcast's legacy instead lay with the groundwork it set when it came to online connectivity. Every Dreamcast console came

In North America and Japan, the Dreamcast logo on the console is orange. In Europe, this was changed to blue.

with its own built-in modem (33.3Kbps in Japan, 56Kbps in the west), which could be connected to the phone line and used to not only browse the internet through the console (at a time when not everyone had a PC that let them do so), but also compete against other players in some games and even download the occasional DLC (downloadable content) for their games. The browsing was basic, the multiplayer lag was frequent and the DLC was tiny, but the seeds had been planted, and even though the PS2 and GameCube would launch without online features, Microsoft's Xbox – said by some to be the natural successor to the Dreamcast – would eventually launch Xbox Live and continue where Sega had left off. Sega also attempted to innovate with its memory card: taking advantage of the popularity of the Tamagotchi and other virtual pets, its Dreamcast memory card – the Visual Memory Unit, or VMU – had a built-in screen. This allowed players to see information while they played, then when they were done they could unplug the VMU and use it to play basic mini-games on the move.

The Dreamcast launched on 27 November 1998 in Japan, 9 September 1999 (9/9/99) in North America and 14 October 1999 in the UK. Despite getting off to a strong start and offering a healthy selection of fantastic games (all of which you'll find in this book), the Dreamcast was always looking over its shoulder. The PlayStation 2 was coming in 2000 and promised to be even more powerful than Sega's console, leaving it in a strange sort of intergenerational limbo where it was too powerful to be considered part of the Saturn / PlayStation / N64 generation, but not powerful enough to be part of the eventual PS2 / GameCube / Xbox generation. It was in its own little niche: a niche with a high quality library of arcade-like games and a dedicated fanbase, but a niche nonetheless.

It soon became clear that the Dreamcast, while impressive, wasn't going to be able to compete with Sony's new powerhouse, and that once the GameCube arrived in 2001 it was likely to fall even further behind. Deciding that the answer to the question 'how do you recover from three flops in a row' was 'we don't', and realising it was struggling financially, Sega decided to cut its losses. On 31 January 2001 – less than 16 months after the console had arrived in North America – Sega announced that it was discontinuing the Dreamcast, and would be restructuring the company to no longer make consoles, and instead become a 'platform-agnostic' third-party game developer. The result in hindsight was probably the correct one: rather than pumping more money into the Dreamcast and potentially going bankrupt, Sega instead continues to be a successful game developer decades later. The Dreamcast may have been a failure on paper, but it's no surprise that many of the 9.13 million people who bought it consider it one of the greatest consoles of all time, mainly due to the quality of its numerous exclusive games, all of which you can start reading about in the following pages.



A look at the Dreamcast's inner workings, courtesy of photographer Evan Amos.

THE GAMES

The Dreamcast's software is the physical embodiment of the console's unique position, stuck between the last generation and the next. Whereas the PlayStation and Saturn had CD-ROM drives offering storage of around 650 MB, the Dreamcast instead offered a new, proprietary disc called the GD-ROM (with the GD standing for Gigabyte Disc instead of Compact Disc). As the name implied, a GD-ROM could hold up to 1 GB (1024 MB), meaning Dreamcast games could hold more data than the previous generation.

The GD-ROM wasn't only designed for increased storage, though: Sega believed that by increasing the disc's capacity it would make it much harder to carry out piracy, one of the biggest worries with CD-based systems (and something that was rife on the PlayStation). This ended up being one of the company's biggest mistakes, however, because the Dreamcast could also still read CD-ROM discs, and its copy protection was practically non-existent at launch (and still easily bypassed with a boot disc with later models). This meant that pirates could take a Dreamcast GD-ROM, cut down the size of games if they were bigger than 650 MB (be that removing the FMV intro or what have you), and burn it onto a CD that would play without issue or modification on early versions of the hardware. Despite creating the GD-ROM as an attempt to curb piracy, Sega had created one of the easiest consoles on which to pirate games.

Piracy aside, the console's oddly timed release between generations meant that the 1 GB disc storage was only a big deal for a limited time, until the PlayStation 2 was released with its DVD-ROM capabilities offering up to 8.5 GB storage. For that brief period when the Dreamcast was on top, however, some of the experiences it offered were mind-blowing. Games like Crazy Taxi brought practically arcade quality graphics to the home for the first time, while Shenmue and its sequel redefined the adventure genre. New Sega franchises took the limelight for the first time too, including Space Channel 5, Jet Set Radio and Samba de Amigo, while fan favourites also saw a return with the likes of Sonic Adventure, Ecco the Dolphin and Sega Rally 2. The Dreamcast was also one of the best places for sports games, whether you were into the arcade-style silliness of the Ready 2 Rumble boxing games, the glorious gameplay of Virtua Tennis, or the birth of the NFL 2K and NBA 2K series (the latter still thriving decades later).

Because the Dreamcast was only out in the west for 16 months before Sega announced it was being discontinued, the console's western library is the smallest yet covered in one of these books, with only around 270 games released in North America and Europe. Even the Nintendo 64, which had its games on the more expensive cartridge format and repelled some third-party publishers as a result, still managed around 300 games in the west because of how long it remained active. Never one to short-change you, my dear reader, however, that simply means each western game gets more space than you may have seen in previous books like *The Mega Drive* and *Genesis Encyclopedia*. Almost every western release gets either a full page or a half page in this book, compared to the quarter pages in books where the library was much more plentiful.

Every screenshot in this section was captured using original Dreamcast hardware, rather than emulation, in an attempt to show what the console was capable of. To obtain the best quality, I used a special RGB 480p SCART cable from a site called Retro Gaming Cables: this cable isn't supported by normal TVs but it is supported by some video upscaling devices, like the RetroTink 5X (which was also used). By combining the two I was able to get the highest quality video possible from the console without modifying it for HDMI output. I hope the results make for a fun read with attractive screenshots that do a good job of illustrating each game.

The Visual Menory Unit (VMU) is used to save game data. It can also be detached from the controller, allowing the player to use its screen and buttons to play basic mini-games on the move.

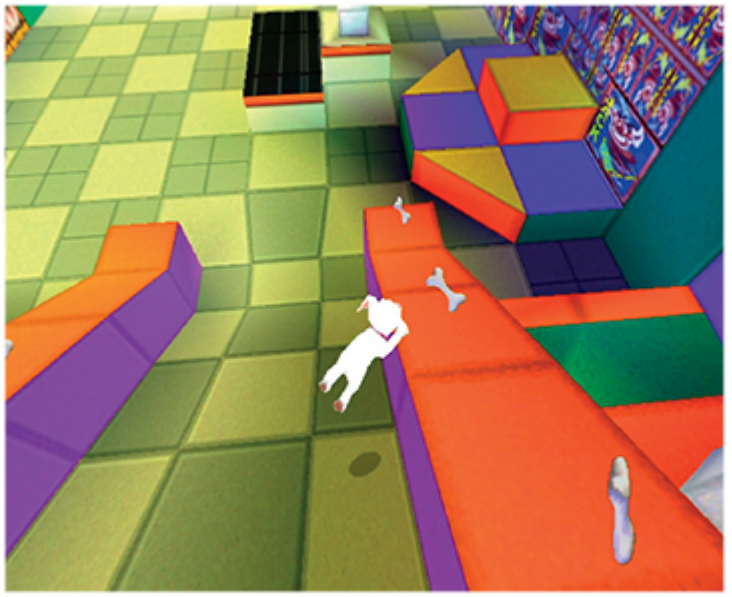
102 DALMATIANS: PUPPIES TO THE RESCUE

Year	2000
Publisher	Eidos Interactive
Developer	Prolific Publishing / Crystal Dynamics

AS THE NAME suggests, 102 Dalmatians was released to coincide with the movie of the same name, but both are completely different. Whereas the film was a live-action sequel in which the evil Cruella de Vil attempts to steal puppies to make a big fur coat (basically a similar plot to *101 Dalmatians*), the game instead takes its art style from Disney's original 1961 animated movie.

The story here goes that Cruella has her own toy factory, but she's furious to find that sales are down because children are too busy spending their allowance on their pets. If things don't turn around quickly her company will go out of business, so Cruella calls her inventor to execute Plan B. With the flick of a switch, Cruella's shelves of unsold toys are activated and reprogrammed with a new function: to kidnap any dogs they find and return them to Cruella, who has surprisingly dark plans for them. She wants to cover the dogs in 'Super-Gloop' and essentially kill them, selling their hardened corpses to children as a new range of 'realistic' toys. Look, it was co-developed by Crystal Dynamics, who had just finished Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver, so what do you expect?

Dalmatian parents Dipstick and Dottie are beside themselves with worry when only two of their puppies, Domino and Oddball, return home. Heading out to look for their missing children, the parents tell the pair to stay home, but being the mischievous types they flick a middle finger to that idea (not literally) and head out in search of their siblings. Players, then, take control of Domino and Oddball as they explore 20 levels set in and around London, including the likes of Regent's Park, Piccadilly Circus, the Royal Museum, the London Underground and… um, 'Spooky Forest'.



The gameplay is typical platformer fare: players take control of either of the puppies and can swap them out for the other whenever they see fit. Other than the fact that one's a boy and one's a girl, they're practically identical and neither has any special abilities that the other doesn't possess. While simply making your way through the stages is the priority, there's also an in-game sticker book which fills with images as you collect them in each stage. There are generally six stickers in each level: four of these have the same task every time – finding the checkpoint, collecting 100 bones, rescuing six puppies and reaching the exit – and two are bespoke tasks unique to each level. This could involve helping an animal friend, laying a booby trap for one of Cruella's minions or what have you.

FACT

The voice of Domino was provided by 15-year-old Frankie Muniz, who became a breakthrough star that same year as the title character in the hit sitcom *Malcolm in the Middle*.

102 Dalmatians was met with the usual indifference most tie-ins aimed at children tend to receive, but while some pointed out that it had its problems – an issue with the controls means it's actually very difficult to walk directly forwards unless you're using the D-Pad instead of the stick – others acknowledged it for being a harmless platformer that does what's required of it. ■

18 WHEELER: AMERICAN PRO TRUCKER

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega AM2 / CRI

ALTHOUGH IT'S OFTEN considered an accompanying piece to Crazy Taxi, 18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker was actually developed by a different studio. Whereas Crazy Taxi was handled by Sega's AM3 studio (later renamed Hitmaker), 18 Wheeler was instead developed by AM2. That's not to say the two are completely different, however: both games have players taking on the job of attempting to reach a set destination before time runs out. That's more or less where the similarities end, though: whereas Crazy Taxi focused on high-speed action with over-the-top leaps and power slides, 18 Wheeler is a significantly slower beast, and instead focuses on power and momentum.

The player can initially choose between four different trucks, each with their own driver: Asphalt Cowboy (driven by the stetson-wearing Texas Hawk), Highway Cat (which belongs to southern belle Wild Rose), Long Horn (manned by an enormous bald chap called Mad Bull) and Stream Line (driven by the afro-sporting Moonlight). A fifth truck, a Japanese-themed rig called Nippon Maru, can be unlocked by clearing Arcade mode with all four starting trucks.

The aim is simply to progress through four stages – initially leaving from New York and eventually ending up in San Francisco – while carrying different types of cargo behind you on a trailer. If you can reach the destination

before the timer runs out, you'll move on to the next stage, otherwise you'll be offered the opportunity to retry. On your route you'll also encounter Lizardtail, a rival trucker who's hell-bent on reaching the finish line before you and will often drive in front of your way or smash into you to try and put you off. The time limit is quite tight, so often in order to reach the goal in time players will have to slipstream behind other trucks for extra speed, and nudge against certain cars who give time bonuses if you hit them. If you can reach the goal and somehow manage to do so before Lizardtail, you'll be rewarded with a bonus stage where you have to park your trailer within a strict time limit, with bonus points deducted for sloppy parking or hitting obstacles. On stages 2–4, you'll also be given a choice between two different trailers: the heavier the trailer, the harder the game is but the more points you get for clearing the stage.

FACT

The game was ported to the PS2 and GameCube in 2001 and 2002 respectively, but Sega handed publishing duties over to Acclaim.

Arcade mode itself is short, but once it's beaten the Dreamcast version has a few extra modes to extend its longevity slightly. Parking mode gives you 30 parking challenges to play through, while Score Attack mode gives you four separate courses – Oval, Sea Side I, Old Town and Sea Side II – and asks you to rack up as many points as possible by hitting bonus cars, all while completing three laps within a certain time limit. There's also a two-player split screen option where players can take on the same Score Attack to see who can score the most points. ■

4 WHEEL THUNDER

Year 2000
Publisher Midway
Developer Kalisto

THE THIRD GAME in Midway's 'Thunder' series of arcade-style racing games (after Hydro Thunder and Offroad Thunder), 4 Wheel Thunder specialises in off-road racing on a selection of vehicle types. There are four distinct types of vehicle depending on your tastes – monster trucks, buggies, jeeps and quads – each of which comes in a couple of styles and a variety of colours. Tracks come in two different types, with six indoor courses and 10 outdoor ones (the latter usually have weather variations, allowing you to play in either a sunny climate or rain, night, snow, sandstorms etc depending on the location). Indoor tracks are more compact and require the player to be more careful with how they approach jumps and the like, while outdoor tracks have more obstacles to overcome and also have shortcuts to learn. As well as the option to play in Arcade mode where you take on separate series of indoor and outdoor races, there's also a lengthy Championship mode where you race through a total of 22 tracks (both indoor and outdoor) and earn money to upgrade your car. Despite its extremely fast racing, the game still takes itself seriously for the most part: at least, until you unlock the final few hidden cars, which are giant novelty cars ridden by animals called Milky (a cow), Pinky (a pink elephant), Pouchy (a camel), Squizzy (a squirrel), Willy (a whale) and Pinguy (a penguin). If that sounds dubious, you can see Pinky in the screenshot. ■

FACT

Kalisto was originally developing the game under the name Xleration, it was then decided it would become part of Midway's 'Thunder' series of racers (see Hydro Thunder later in the book).

4X4 EVOLUTION

Year 2000
Publisher Gathering of Developers
Developer Terminal Reality

ALSO COMMONLY KNOWN by its title screen logo 4x4 Evo, this offroad racer may not run at a smooth 60fps like the game sitting above it on this page, but that's because it delivers a different style of racing. Whereas 4 Wheel Thunder's courses are generally pretty clearly defined with the odd shortcut here and there, the tracks in 4x4 Evolution are notably less set in stone. While each race has a series of checkpoints that may be passed through in order, as well as a course map that can be followed, players can freely drive off the track and go wandering wherever they like (especially because the game is extremely lenient with how well cars can drive up steep hills). If you can find a shorter route to the next checkpoint than following the standard road, more power to you, and the AI-controlled cars will often attempt to do the same. As well as Quick Race and Time Trial options, the game has a detailed Career mode where players start off by buying a low-powered car and entering various race series or one-off events to earn cash that lets them either buy more powerful vehicles or upgrade the ones they already own. Whereas the cars in 4 Wheel Thunder are fictional, here they're licensed, with vehicles from Chevrolet, Dodge, Ford, GMC, Lexus, Mitsubishi, Nissan and Toyota available for purchase. If you're looking to drive a monster truck with a giant cow behind the wheel though, Midway's offering may be more your bag. ■

FACT

A European PAL version, published by Take-Two Interactive, was so close to release that it was reviewed in some magazines, but was ultimately scrapped.

90 MINUTES: SEGA CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Smilebit

THE GENERAL BELIEF among football (soccer) fans is that the Dreamcast was never really blessed with a truly fantastic representation of the sport at any point throughout its life. While there was a reasonable enough selection of competent and even enjoyable football games on the console, the fact that Konami's ISS series and EA's FIFA games never came near it meant that Sega fans had to make do with whatever they could get. As one of the final football games released on the Dreamcast, the hope was that 90 Minutes: Sega Championship Football would provide a final last-gasp, stoppage time winner that would finally give fans of the sport the cast-iron classic they'd been missing out on. According to critical reception at the time, however, it didn't quite accomplish this.

The game contains 32 national teams and 110 club teams. The majority of the latter consist of the English, French, German, Italian and Spanish leagues, each of which are represented by every team that took part in their top-flight competitions in the 2000/01 season. Although the club names, kits and badges aren't officially licensed (leading to such team names as the awkwardly misspelt Turnin Juventus), the player names are still accurate, so choose to play as France and you'll still be blessed with the likes of Barthez, Petit,

Zidane and Henry in your team. That said, the players don't look enormously like their real-life counterparts with only basic defining characteristics such as skin colour and hairstyle identifying them.

Players can either take part in the World Championship mode (which is essentially an unofficial World Cup), compete in any of the five aforementioned domestic leagues, or take on a variety of club and national tournaments. A training mode also allows players to practice corner kicks, free kicks and the like. While it's fairly comprehensive in terms of features (at least for its era), the criticism levelled at 90 Minutes was mainly focused on the actual 90 minutes themselves: that is, the action on the pitch. The game can suffer from extreme slowdown at times, making it difficult to accurately gauge player speeds and time tackles. The controls can also be pretty unresponsive when it comes to performing actions like changing direction, passing and shooting: this is mainly because the game insists on letting players finish their animations before moving on to the next action. This can lead to frustrating situations where you'll try to pass, but your player will run five or six steps before they actually kick the ball.

Criticism was also aimed at the commentary, which was provided by Sky TV's Alan Parry. While Parry himself is known for being a top-tier commentator, the game does him no favours by constantly repeating soundbites and patching lines together awkwardly. The result was a game that *DC:UK* magazine gave a score of 30 per cent, saying it was glad the 90 Minutes title wasn't accurate because 'luckily you don't have to play it for that long'. ■

FACT

The game's soundtrack was composed by Masayoshi Ishi, who often goes by the nickname Chamy. Many years later, he was the music director on Mario Party 9 and Mario Party 10.

AEROWINGS

Year 1999
Publisher Crave Entertainment
Developer CRI

AEROWINGS IS A flight simulator that has a particular focus on aerobatics. Originally released in Japan as Aero Dancing Featuring Blue Impulse, the game revolves around the Blue Impulse team, a real-life division of the Japan Air Self-Defence Force. Essentially the Japanese equivalent of the Red Arrows or Thunderbirds, they specialise in performing fancy mid-air tricks, and that's what you have to pull off here. The game's split into two main modes, Blue Impulse Mission and Sky Mission Attack. In the former, players have to carry out a series of manoeuvres and are then scored on their performance. If your performance is accurate enough you'll unlock the next mission, and so on until you get to join Blue Impulse and eventually work your way up to squad leader status. Sky Mission Attack, meanwhile, gives you eight different areas – ranging from a desert, to the city, or even the moon – as you attempt to fly through rings in each of them. Players can switch between three different camera views: a cockpit view for more accurate movements, a 'chase' cam which sits the camera right beyond your plane, and a 'formation' cam which zooms quite a bit back, making it easier to see where your plane is lined up compared to your Blue Impulse partners. AeroWings is notable for offering more attention to detail than most console fight sims at the time: players have to manually control the landing gear, faps and air brakes when taking off or landing, for example. ■

FACT

Blue Impulse pilots are also known as Dolphin Riders, so it's possible to unlock an actual dolphin to fly around in the game (as well as a flying car, because why not).

AEROWINGS 2: AIRSTRIKE

Year 2000
Publisher Crave Entertainment / Ubisoft
Developer CRI

IT SEEMS THE majesty of pulling off loops, swoops and flips perfectly in sync with other pilots wasn't enough for some players, who felt that AeroWings was lacking when it came to action. And by action, that of course means guns and explosions. AeroWings 2 attempts to scratch that itch by ditching the Blue Impulse partnership and instead shifting the focus from barrel rolls to gun barrels. Replacing the Blue Impulse Mission mode from the first game is Fighter Pilot Missions, which consists of 30 lessons designed to teach the player how to effectively shoot down and evade enemies. Then it's onto the Tactical Challenges mode, which offers 15 missions, all of which involve shooting down something. At first you'll be trying to take out massive balloons before a time limit runs out, but then you move on to actual aerial dogfights against other planes. There's also a free flight mode where you can pick any location you want and either peacefully fly around, or add one or two AI planes for some target practice. While realism is still very much the focus here as in the first AeroWings, the addition of combat commands to the already packed control set-up means some of the things that were user-controlled in the first game – such as the landing gear and air brakes – are now automated. The game also automatically chooses between guns and missiles for you, selecting the weapon it feels is best suited for the situation. ■

FACT

The Japanese version of the game, known as Aero Dancing F, included an option called 'Cable Play'. This is a system link option allowing two players to connect their Dreamcasts and play each other on separate TVs.

AIRFORCE DELTA

Year 1999
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

KNOWN IN EUROPE as Deadly Skies, this is an aerial combat game played with a first-person perspective. You play as a pilot working for Airforce Delta, a foreign mercenary defence organisation who's been asked to defend Laconia, a newly independent republic that recently declared independence from the Federated Republic of Dzavailar. Rebels from Dzavailar have decided they want to reunite the territory but Laconia has no real military to speak of, which is why Airforce Delta has been called in to protect it and stop the takeover. Cue a series of 20 missions where you take on such tasks as destroying enemy battleships, protecting a commercial jet as it tries to leave, blowing up hidden supply bases and destroying the solar panels on a satellite as it falls from the sky (that's a particularly difficult one) before finally facing off against Colonel Zan Daas and his MiG-1.44 MFI plane. Speaking of aircraft, the game starts you off in your trusty F-5E Tiger II but has a whole host of others to unlock. Given that you're a mercenary you're paid handsomely for completing each mission, and this money can then be spent on new aircraft, with a further 30 on top of your starting plane available to eventually unlock. These include the likes of the MiG-31 Foxhound, the F-20 Tiger Shark, the F-15E Strike Eagle and, if you can beat the game on Hard difficulty, the UK-manufactured English Electric Lightning F6 which was used in the RAF from 1960 until the late '80s. ■

FACT

The manual refers to Dzavailar as Zabayral. The Japanese language interchanges B and V, as well as R and L, so whoever translated the game and manual interpreted the Japanese 'Zabairaru' differently.

ALIEN FRONT ONLINE

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer WOW Entertainment

ALIEN FRONT WAS originally released in Japan in arcades, before Sega decided to bring it to the Dreamcast and use it to help push the console's online multiplayer features. By the time the game was released in North America in August 2001, however, it was hard to get excited about its potential: Sega had already announced in January that it was discontinuing the Dreamcast, and as such Alien Front Online was destined to be ignored. It's a third-person arena-based action game where human soldiers face off against an invading alien army known as the Triclops. Players can choose to fight for either side, choosing from either a selection of Earth tanks or a series of Triclops vehicles ranging from hovercars to weird walking contraptions. Although the online mode is obviously long gone, there's still plenty to do for solo players. Not only does it feature the main Arcade mode, where you have to gun down a set number of enemies before your timer runs out, but it also includes a new mode called Tactics which is surprisingly meaty. This consists of two lengthy campaigns – one for the humans, one for the Triclops – with players taking on a bunch of branching missions. Alien Front Online was also bundled with the Dreamcast Microphone, which allowed for voice chat while playing (a feature ahead of its time considering Xbox Live was still more than a year away). Ultimately, Alien Front Online's late arrival on a flatlining console meant it didn't sell in great numbers, and had to settle for being one of the Dreamcast's true hidden gems. ■

FACT

A number of Dreamcast games (including this one) can actually still be played online via some modern gadgetry. Have a look online for DreamPi for more info.

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

Year	2001
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Darkworks

RESIDENT EVIL MAY be the series most people think of when the term 'survival horror' is mentioned, but Infogrames' original 1992 adventure Alone in the Dark predates it by about four years and is considered by many to be the first true example of the genre. After Alone in the Dark 3 was released in 1994, the series took a break, during which time Capcom appeared with Resident Evil and took over the genre. By the time Infogrames had decided to reboot Alone in the Dark and released The New Nightmare, players had already enjoyed four Resident Evil games (including Code: Veronica), and as such The New Nightmare was somewhat ironically considered a Resi imitator by some not in the know.

Although it's technically the fourth game in the Alone in the Dark series, The New Nightmare lives up to its title by establishing a new universe separate from the original trilogy. Although one of the protagonists is still an investigator called Edward Carnby, The New Nightmare is set in 2001 rather than the 1920s setting of the previous games. Carnby's investigating the death of his colleague and friend Charles Fiske, who's been found murdered on the mysterious Shadow Island. After learning Fiske was looking for three ancient tables, Carnby befriends a young university professor called Aline Cedrac and she agrees to fly with him to the island to investigate. When their plane crashes, Carnby and Aline are separated and have to figure out what's going on.

The game is similar to Resident Evil in that players get to play as either protagonist, but whereas Resi starts both players in the same location and generally gives them a similar route to follow, The New Nightmare instead drops Carnby in a forest outside a large mansion, and drops Aline on the roof of said mansion. While both their stories do intersect at times, it does at least mean that each character's adventure starts off differently.

The game uses the same combination of fixed camera angles and pre-rendered backgrounds seen in previous Alone in the Dark and Resident Evil games, but adds an interesting twist by building the entire game around light, something pre-rendered backgrounds should technically struggle with.

The game's monsters come from near the centre of the Earth and have spent their lives in darkness, so in order to combat them Cranby and Aline have to use light. Their powerful flashlights can stun these creatures, while special ammunition made of magnesium and phosphorus is used to defeat them. The flashlight is also used to reveal hidden items in the game's environments, but since the backgrounds were pre-rendered, static images it would be impossible to simply shine a light on them and get a realistic effect. To get around this, the development team at Darkworks pre-rendered each scene at different levels of illumination, and essentially 'stacked' the images on top of each other. Any time the flashlight was shone in a certain direction, the game would swap out that part of the background for a different, more lit pre-rendered section. The result is surprisingly effective. ■

FACT

The New Nightmare's musical score was composed by Stewart Copeland, former drummer of The Police. Copeland also composed the music for the first four Spyro games, but (at the time of writing) this was the only other game he was involved with.

AQUA GT

Year 2001
Publisher Take-Two Interactive
Developer East Point Software

WITH HYDRO THUNDER already available on the Dreamcast, European exclusive Aqua GT was going to have to offer something unique if it wanted to claim the powerboat racing crown on Sega's console. Time would tell that it didn't quite manage this, but that's not to say it didn't have at least one interesting idea. Naturally, the game is a racer where players choose from a series of powerboats – there are five at first, but a bunch more can be unlocked, eventually bringing the total to 20 – then take part in races set in cities around the world. We aren't talking breathtaking realism here, which explains why the game conveniently places national landmarks alongside the track. The USA course, for example, pulls the Statue of Liberty a couple of miles down the river so it's right next to the Brooklyn Bridge. The game's main gimmick is that each of its seven tracks – England, Holland, Germany, France, Italy, USA and Japan – is available in four different styles. You can play each of them in either day or night settings, but you can also play them during high tide and low tide. This isn't just an aesthetic change either: if you race when the tide is high you can cut some corners by sliding over land, but when the tide is low those smooth corners become walls and can no longer be used to your advantage. An interesting idea, but ultimately not enough to ensure the game's long-term success. ■

FACT

Forgive me for pointing this out but the blurb on the packaging goes overboard (ahem) with punctuation, asking: 'Do you have what it takes to be a winner or will you be left drowning?!!!'

ARMADA

Year 1999
Publisher Metro3D
Developer Metro3D

ARMADA IS AN ambitious top-down title that's part shoot 'em up, part RPG. The game's intro and manual tell completely different stories, so let's go with the one that was committed to disc. When a group of aliens called the Armada make contact with Earth, the human race's excitement at first contact with extra-terrestrials quickly turns to terror as they realise this isn't a friendly greeting. The Armada attacks the planet and the humans escape, scattering across the universe in separate groups. Thousands of years pass and each civilisation, having progressed in completely different directions, decides to join together and head back to Earth to destroy the Armada and reclaim their planet. After letting you choose one of six different races, the game opens with you flying around a safe home planet, where you can 'scan' other NPC ships to communicate with them. At any point you can head up to outer space, where you can then freely fly around, taking on enemy ships and collecting experience and money that can be used to upgrade your abilities until you're finally ready to take on the Armada. Along the way you'll be given sets of X and Y coordinates where you can fly to find missions, land on other locations and the like. The game was originally pitched as an online title but this didn't end up happening: it can be played locally by up to four players simultaneously, however. ■

FACT

If you're curious, the manual's plot says the Earth's population left the planet, unprompted, and split up to populate the universe, and that the Armada then turned up 10,000 years later to attack each tribe for no apparent reason.

ARMY MEN: SARGE'S HEROES

Year 2000
Publisher Midway
Developer Saffire / The 3DO Company

AN ASTONISHING 19 Army Men games were released in the four years between 1998 and 2002, but the Dreamcast was only subjected to one of them. Sarge's Heroes is the fourth game in the series and has players taking control of the eponymous Sergeant Hawk, the leader of a platoon of green toy soldiers called Bravo Company. The Tan Army and their leader General Plastro have attacked the Greens' camp and kidnapped their five elite soldiers, the Bravo Company Commandos, as well as Vikki (the daughter of Colonel Grimm, Sarge's boss). And if you think the Colonel is going to tell Sarge to put his plastic green feet up and wait to see if they just come back, you probably don't know how video game storylines work. Playing as Sarge, you have to take on 16 missions, gunning down countless Tan Army soldiers in search of your kidnapped colleagues. At first the game is set in a battlefield that appears to be to scale, but at the end of the second mission Sarge steps through a portal and discovers that there's another world (the real world) where he's tiny compared to everything else. Cue frequent jumps back and forth between Sarge's world and the real world, the latter's stages naturally being more interesting because of the size difference. Sarge's Heroes was generally criticised for its awkward camera, something that plagued a lot of third-person adventure games on systems with only one analogue stick. ■

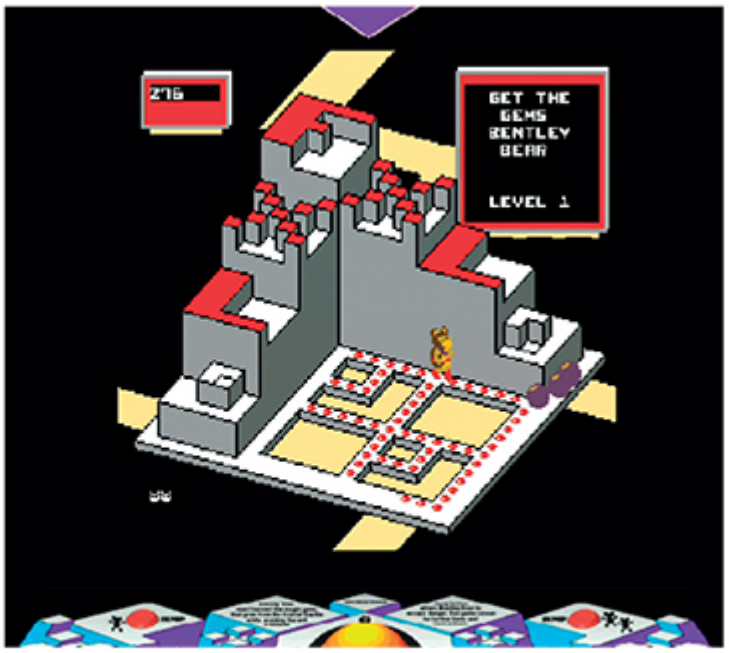
FACT

The Dreamcast version's first stage has a photo of a young girl (likely a developer's daughter) hidden in a vent, while a later level has a hidden room where the wall shows a bizarre photo of a foot with a person's head sewn onto the big toe.

ATARI ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Year 2001
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Digital Eclipse

BY THE TIME the Dreamcast arrived the concept of retro games was very much a real one, with a number of retro compilations already releasing on the PlayStation and the like. The Dreamcast got a handful of these collections too, including the $14.99 Atari Anniversary Edition, handled by retro masters Digital Eclipse. As the name suggests, it includes a bunch of classic games from Atari, 12 of the sods to be precise: Asteroids, Asteroids Deluxe, Battlezone, Centipede, Crystal Castles, Gravitar, Millipede, Missile Command, Pong, Super Breakout, Tempest and Warlords. Each game is a near-perfect rendition of the arcade originals, and there's the option to either play with the arcade cabinet surrounding the screen, or ditch the border so the game can fill the screen instead. Once you've had your fill of the games themselves there's also a separate section called Archive which offers a surprisingly in-depth helping of bonus content related to each game. As well as posters and other Atari paraphernalia there's also a 36-minute interview with Atari co-founder Nolan Bushnell which is split down into small chunks, in which he discusses such topics as the beginning of Atari, the history of Pong and the strategy he claims was responsible for the huge (initial) success of the Atari 2600 console in North America. These days Digital Foundry's retro releases often contain lots of bonus content, but this was one of the first examples of the developer really going to town and adding more than just the games themselves. ■



FACT

In the video interview, Bushnell reveals that his favourite game of all time is the board game Go, which is unsurprising given that the name Atari is based on a Go term.

BANG! GUNSHIP ELITE

Year 2000
Publisher Red Storm Entertainment
Developer Rayland Interactive

IT TAKES QUITE a bit of confidence to put a dramatic exclamation in the title of your game (see also Blam! Machinehead on the Saturn and PlayStation), but that's exactly the opening salvo that Bang! Gunship Elite leads with. This space shooter has an extremely in-depth plot with lashings of law but the TL;DR version is that there are three races – the Arikhans, the Dagons and the Namidians – who have all formed an alliance to protect a precious mineral called Kha, which is an extremely powerful energy source. It soon turns out that an evil race called the Sektar quite fancies having all the Kha for itself, so it teams up with the equally nasty Morgoths and starts launching attacks on unprotected alliance outposts. You play as an Arikhan fighter pilot called Xaha, who doesn't have a lot of experience but gets thrust into the action anyway because, well, all the more senior pilots have already been killed. The game consists of 19 missions and has you flying your ship around a series of open space environments, gunning down enemy fighters. It isn't all mindless action: some enemies are only truly vulnerable to certain types of weapon, for example, so there's at least some degree of thought to proceedings instead of just taping down the fire button. Although Bang! Gunshop Elite isn't remembered much these days, it's probably one of the most visually impressive Dreamcast games and still holds its own today. ■

FACT

The back of the box has an odd typo, in that it claims 'adaptive AI adjusts to each player's skill level' twice in a list of features (let alone that it doesn't really seem to be the case anyway).

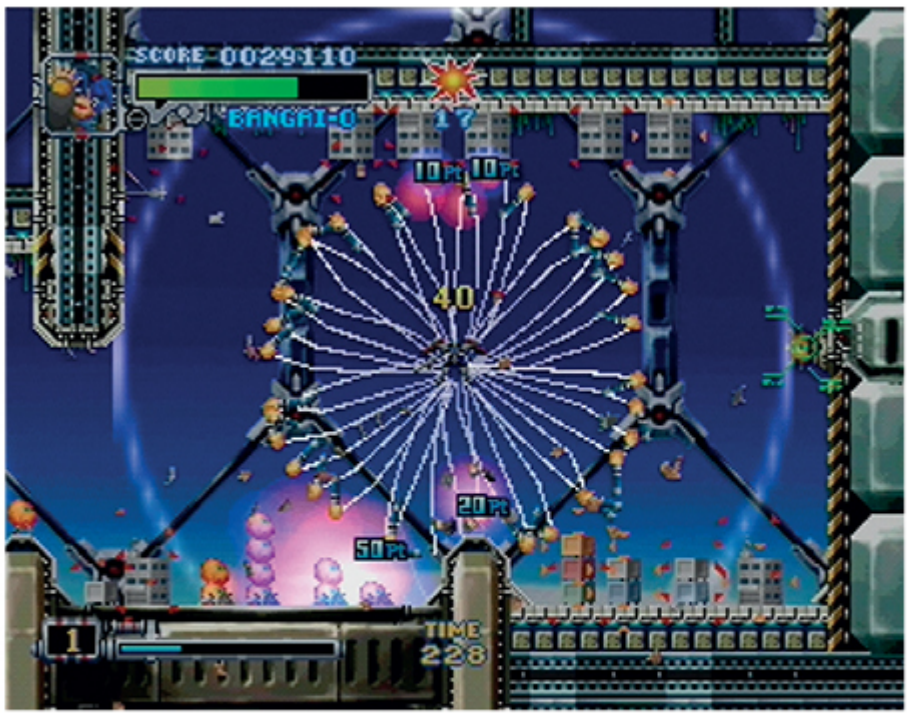
BANGAI-O

Year 1999
Publisher Crave Entertainment / Swing! Entertainment
Developer Treasure / Conspiracy Entertainment

WHEN TREASURE PROGRAMMER Mitsuru Yaida was playing an old Japanese PC game (generally believed to be 1985 title Hover Attack), he was impressed at the number of bullets it could display on screen. Curious to see how many could be achieved with more modern technology, he started work on Bangai-O, a retro-themed mech shooter where wanton destruction is the order of the day. You play as mech pilot Riki and his sister Mami – you switch between them with a press of the L trigger – as they try to clean up their planet Dan Star from an intergalactic crime syndicate called the SK Kosmo Gang. The aim in each of the game's 44 stages is straightforward – find the boss and defeat them – but the fun is in the chaos that ensues on the way there. Each stage is littered with enemies and SK Kosmo Gang buildings, and as you destroy things you build up a 'bombing energy' meter. Fill this to the maximum and you'll store a scatter bomb (up to a maximum of five), which fires shots all over the place. The twist, though, is that the power of the scatter bomb depends on how close enemy bullets are to you, and how many there are. If you're skilful enough to trigger your bomb when you're milliseconds away from being gunned down in a hail of fire, the resulting blast is a thing of screen-filling beauty, with up to 400 missiles able to be fired at once. ■

FACT

A special Prize Edition of Bangai-O is considered by some to be the rarest Dreamcast game. The game is identical but it comes with a poster and signed phone cards. Only five were made.



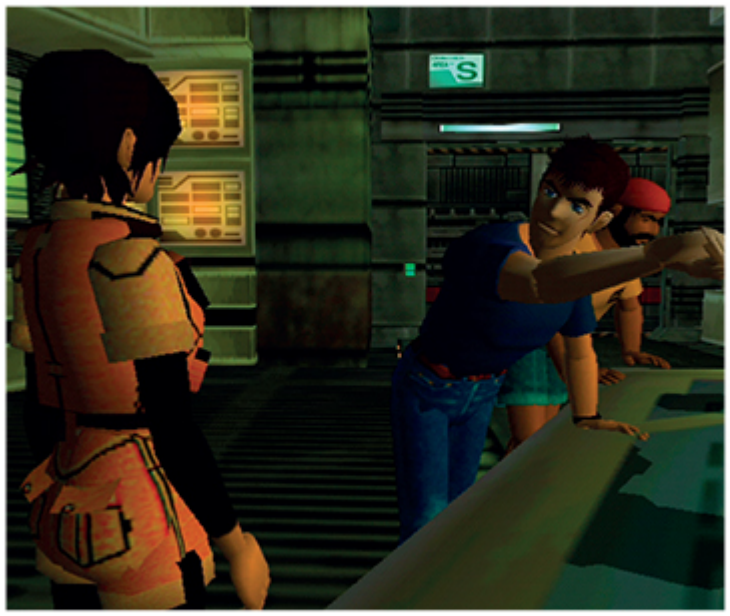
BLUE STINGER

Year 1999
Publisher Activision
Developer Climax Graphics

EVERY NEW CONSOLE has a selection of launch games, but how many could boast that it had a pre-launch game? Bizarrely, Activision decided to release Blue Stinger in North America on 31 August, some nine days before the Dreamcast was even available to buy, meaning anyone who loved reading manuals and studying box art could get a head-start on those poor fools waiting until day one.

The game initially has you playing as Eliot Ballade, a member of the Emergency Sea and Evacuation Forces who's taking some much needed time off by doing a spot of fishing at Dinosaur Island (so called because it's where the meteor that killed the dinosaurs crashed). While he's relaxing on his boat, another meteor lands on Dinosaur Island, placing it under a mysterious dome of energy. With no way to get out of the dome, Eliot decides to find out what's going on, but soon he – and his newfound partner, the mysterious Dogs Bower – discover that Dinosaur Island is now somehow infested with monsters and mutants.

As the first survival horror game on the Dreamcast, Blue Stinger has some interesting ideas. Most notable of these is the game's economy system, which forces players to engage in battle for rewards. Rather than leaving health and ammo lying around the island, the game instead keeps them inside vending machines. The main way the player can earn money is to directly take on the creatures they encounter: killing them causes them to explode in a comical shower of coins, which then have to be frantically picked up before they disappear (some of them get stuck in the scenery, because 1999 video games).



Curiously, the Japanese and western versions of Blue Stinger differ greatly when it comes to the in-game camera. When the game was first released in Japan, a number of import reviews criticised its camera, which dramatically swoops all over the place in an attempt to look somewhat cinematic. Concerned that such criticisms would carry over to domestic reviews when the game was released in the west, developer Climax completely overhauled the camera to a less eccentric, 'safer' over-the-shoulder third-person viewpoint. This wasn't entirely without criticism either, however, because the fact that the game wasn't originally created with this camera in mind meant there were plenty of situations where it got awkwardly jammed into walls and the like.

FACT

Blue Stinger has a fictional soft drink called Hassy. It returned in Illbleed and, a decade and a half later, appeared in indie cyberpunk adventure 2064: Read Only Memories.

Blue Stinger is also both heavily condemned and gleefully praised (depending on who you ask) for its comically cheesy dialogue, and a hero who takes feminism back about 150 years. When Eliot first meets Janine, a computer mastermind who helps him make his way through Dinosaur Island, Eliot tells Dogs she's 'my kind of girl, so stay away from her'. Such a noble gent. The questionable script aside, Blue Stinger enjoys a cult following to this day, and while it's far from the most competent example of the survival horror genre its B-movie style (not to mention its arbitrary Christmas setting) ensures it's still memorable, if clunky. ■

BOMBERMAN ONLINE

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Hudson Soft / h.a.n.d. Inc

AS ONE OF the first video game series to regularly support four or more players, Bomberman established a reputation throughout the '90s as one of the best multiplayer party experiences. With its four controller ports the Dreamcast was a perfect fit for Hudson Soft's series, but the addition of online support added a new dimension to proceedings. Since online play through a 33.3Kbps modem regularly led to lag, and since Bomberman lives or dies (literally) by players' split-second decisions, the game received a few tweaks to lessen potential annoyances. For starters, although up to eight players could play online, such battles were limited to two consoles, with four players on each, reducing the complexity of the data being transferred. On top of this, the game introduced a 'judging system' when collecting items: instead of instantly giving a collected item to a player, the game would take a second or two to establish that they had indeed been the person who got to the item first before awarding it to them.

While many other Bomberman games tend to have separate single-player modes set on stages with wandering enemies, Bomberman Online's solo offering focuses on the same sort of battles you get in the multiplayer mode. The game is set during the 'Bomb-a-lympics', which take place on Planet Bomber's Quintet Island every four years. As the island's name suggests, there are five different battle events taking place, and the player has to win them all to get a sacred gold medal.

FACT

Of the over 60 Bomberman console and handheld games released over the years, Bomberman Online is the only one that was released exclusively in North America.

Both the single-player and multiplayer battle modes feature five distinct rulesets, each with their own quirks. The first is Survival Rule, which plays like traditional Bomberman: blow up your opponents, try not to be blown up yourself, whoever's left standing is the winner. Ring Match Rule is similar, but players are given unlimited lives and the game is scored with a points-based system, with players scoring a point every time they get a kill. Hyper Bomber Rule is a Capture the Flag style situation in which players have to collect three special target panels (which, naturally, they drop if they're blown up) then carry them to a gate in the centre of the stage to win.

The last two are perhaps the most unusual. Submarine Rule is almost like a real-time version of Battleship: the arena is split into two halves, and when you a drop a bomb on your half it quickly moves to the equivalent space on your opponent's half just before it blows up. Finally, Panel Paint Rule has players trying to colour as much of the arena with their paint as possible: when you trigger an explosion it paints any part of the floor it touches, but if you're blown up all your paint disappears and you have to start from scratch.

The online element of Bomberman Online was switched off just a couple of years after the game was released, but thankfully the vast majority of the content was stored offline on the disc, meaning if you buy it today there's still plenty to enjoy. ■

BUGGY HEAT

Year 1999
Publisher ASC Games
Developer CRI

AMERICANS MAY KNOW this game better as TNN Motorsports Hardcore Heat, but in Europe and its native Japan it had the slightly cuddlier name Buggy Heat. Although at first glance this US launch title is little more than a straightforward off-road racing game, it does have a couple of interesting features that set it apart from the rest of the pack. Most notable of these is a curious AI mode where you get to train your own AI racer by taking on a series of time trial races and letting it learn how you approach each corner. Over time your AI clone will transform from a useless trundling bumble-nuts behind the wheel to a competent driver who can perform as well as… well, as you. Once the AI racer has been fully trained you can technically play with yourself (shh) or give a friend your VMU so they can race against 'you' on their own copy of the game. Another neat trick Buggy Heat offers is a unique camera angle which shows an in-car view of your racer in the corner of the screen. As you drive, you actually get to see your racer accurately turning the wheel, using the pedals and using the gearstick to change gears, which is a nice little touch that even many modern racing games don't do. Ultimately, despite its innovations, Buggy Heat was generally criticised by the press for its handling, which was considered too loose, and players were advised to wait for the release of Sega Rally 2 instead. ■

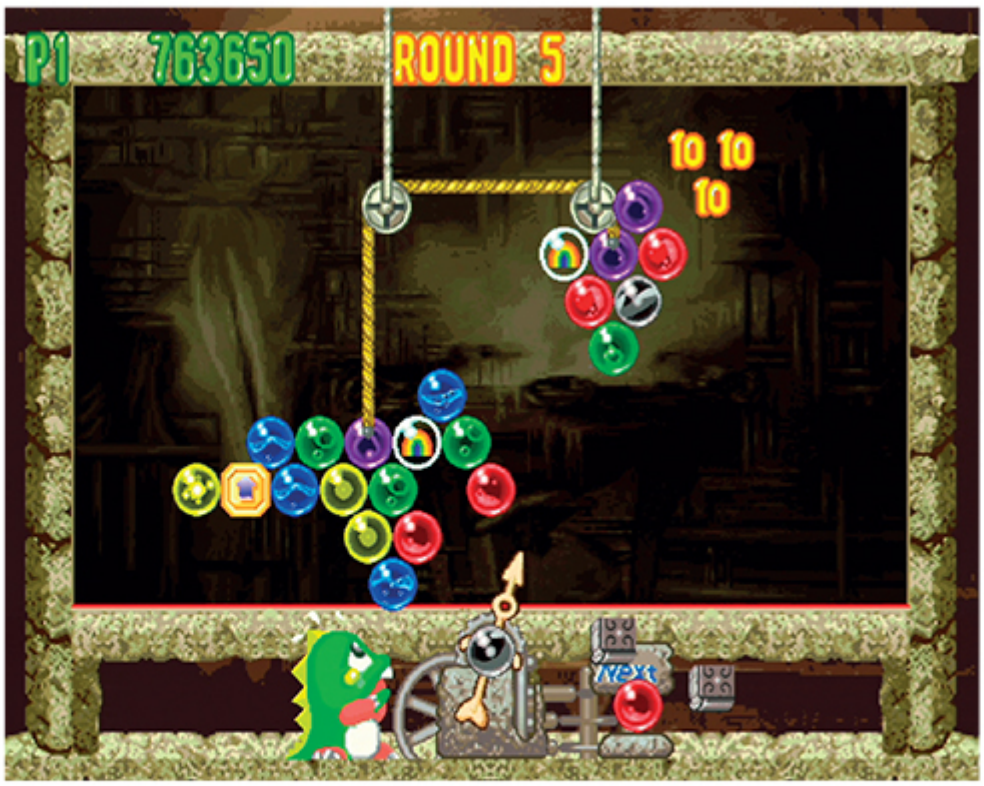
FACT

French games magazines were all over the place when it came to Buggy Heat. *Consoles+* gave it a score of 92 per cent, while *Player One* gave it 15 per cent, declaring it 'the worst game in the Dreamcast library'.

BUST-A-MOVE 4

Year 2000
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Taito

THE BUST-A-MOVE SERIES (known in Japan as Puzzle Bobble) initially consisted of four numbered entries, all of which were released on Sega consoles. While the first game saw a port on the humble Game Gear, the second and third came to the Saturn. By the time Bust-a-Move 4 came around, then, it was time for the Dreamcast to enjoy some bubble-bursting bliss. As is always the case in the series, each stage puts you in a screen filled with coloured bubbles and tasks you with clearing them all by firing more bubbles at them with a little harpoon gun thing. If your shot results in three or more bubbles of the same colour touching, they'll disappear (causing any bubbles that were hanging onto them to fall off the stage too). The main gimmick added to the fourth instalment is a pulley system, in which some levels feature a big elaborate pulley with groups of bubbles attached to either side. The pulley works exactly like you'd expect a set of scales to work, in that each side is sensitive to weight, so if you focus on one side of the pulley and pop all the bubbles there the other side will drop drastically because it's now heavier. The trick, then, is to make sure both sides are given equal treatment to avoid any tipping incidents. ■



FACT

As with its predecessor Bust-a-Move 3, if you try to enter your name as SEX in the high score table the game will censor it. In the last game it's changed to PB3, here it's AAA.

BUZZ LIGHTYEAR OF STAR COMMAND

Year 2000
Publisher Activision
Developer Traveller's Tales

THIS CURIOUS PLATFORMER isn't actually based directly on the *Toy Story* movies, but on a short-lived spin-off animated series that aired on UPN in the US for a single season before it was scrapped. As the name suggests, it focuses on Buzz Lightyear: not the toy one that chums around with Woody, but the 'actual' character the toy is supposed to be based on. In the game, the evil Emperor Zurg has sent a number of his henchmen to planets all over the galaxy, in an attempt to bring the whole shebang under his control. It's up to Buzz to travel to each planet and chase down each henchman, before giving them a swift laser blast to the bum to stop their meddling. The aim, naturally, is to defeat every goon until Buzz finally reaches Planet Z for a final showdown with Zurg. When I say 'chase down', I mean it: the game is an odd action platformer-racing hybrid. Each stage starts with Buzz running after his target, chasing them through a series of platforms and hazards while trying not to fall too far behind. It's only once you catch up with them at the end of the level that the 'race' element stops and the game switches to a more traditional boss battle. The game, much like the show itself, didn't take off to an extraordinary degree, and while its 'pursue then fight' gimmick was somewhat original, Dreamcast *Toy Story* fans were drawn more to the actual Toy Story 2 game. ■

FACT

In both the show and the game Buzz is voiced by Patrick Warburton, who would later become better known as Joe Swanson from Family Guy. His Buzz Lightyear voice is nearly identical, to be fair.

CAESARS PALACE 2000: MILLENNIUM GOLD EDITION

Year 2000
Publisher Interplay
Developer Runecraft

WHEN A CASINO game's box blurb promises that you're about to 'go behind the velvet ropes and experience the roller coaster ride of a lifetime', then – with the very greatest of respect to it – there's no way it can live up to that. Sadly, Caesars Palace 2000 would end up with a number of negative reviews, including a 1/10 from UK publication *Dreamcast Monthly* which claimed it 'stinks of sloppiness'. But hey, one person's bust is another's blackjack, so this officially licensed gamble 'em up may strike a chord with you regardless. There are 11 games to choose from here: Blackjack, Roulette, Craps (resist the obvious joke), Video Poker, Poker Challenge, Pai-Gow Poker, Video Keno, Mini-Baccarat, Red Dog, War and Spanish 21. There are also five fairly generic slot machines named Progressive Fruit, Ancient Egypt, Wild West, Baseball Challenge and Halloween Spooky. All the games offer the official Caesars Palace rules and the odds and payouts have been verified by gaming consultant Dr William Bertram PhD, so if you're a real Caesars Palace nut there's potential for at least some interest here. Ultimately, though, most critics slated the game for its exceptionally slow pace (including a Blackjack dealer who hands out each card extremely slowly as if it was made out of explosives), and the obvious fact that you can't actually win any real money – and, indeed, can just take out a loan if you run out, which isn't a very healthy message – means the roller coaster analogy feels slightly hyperbolic. ■

FACT

The opening night party at Caesars Palace in 1966 cost $1 million ($9 million in today's money) and included the largest order of Ukrainian caviar ever placed at the time.

CANNON SPIKE

Year	2000
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Psikyo

CANNON SPIKE IS one of those games that, if you've never heard of it, likely sounds like fan fiction. An arcade shoot 'em up starring the likes of Mega Man, Cammy from Street Fighter and Arthur from Ghouls n Ghosts? Surely such nonsense doesn't exist. And yet it did, and it's arguably one of the most underrated titles on the Dreamcast. Pulling that classic video game trope of the setting the game in the nondescript future year 20XX, Cannon Spike takes place in a future where a troubled economy is wreaking havoc on the world while terrorism and warfare is rampant (so the year probably isn't that inaccurate, to be fair).

The problem is, these terrorists are using robot soldiers to do their dirty work for them, so to put a stop to these issues the World Union for Peace (aka the bootleg United Nations) decides to put together a special group of fighters – an Anti-Robot Special Force – and arms them with specialised motor boots to help them keep up with their mechanical foes. The game initially appears to only have five characters: the aforementioned Cammy and Arthur, as well as Charlie from Street Fighter Alpha, Shiba from arcade title Three Wonders and an original character called Simone. However, by simply moving the cursor off-screen while selecting their character, players can also choose Mega Man, or B.B. Hood from Darkstalkers.

Though all the playable protagonists are from Capcom games, Cannon Spike wasn't actually developed by Capcom itself, but was instead handled by Psiyko, a Japanese studio which specialised in arcade shoot 'em ups. Naturally, then, gunplay is very much the order of the day here, with each character boasting two types of shot: a rapid fire one and a more effective 'heavy shot' which has a lot more power but needs to be aimed with a little more care because of the length of time between shots. Players can either aim their shots manually, or hold the R button to lock onto an opponent: the latter only lasts for a few seconds though, so you can't just lock on in boss battles and focus on dodging bullets.

FACT

Cammy's Cannon Spike outfit can be found in Street Fighter V: Arcade Edition. When you wear it, she'll make references to the game when fighting fellow Cannon Spike alumni Charlie and Vega.

The twist is that some of the enemies you come up against – even the lower-level grunts – don't take a lot of damage from bullets, but thankfully each character has another trick up their sleeve (or robot arm, or suit of armour, depending on who you choose). As well as two different types of shot, each character also has two types of physical attack, allowing them to get up close and give a kicking to the enemies who react more to such aggression. Cammy, for example, has a quick attack button which lets her pull off a short combo including her Cannon Drill move from Street Fighter, as well as a more powerful attack button where she performs her upwards Cannon Spike move (in case you were wondering where the title came from). The result is an interesting hybrid that's part shoot 'em up, part beat 'em up. ■

CAPCOM VS SNK

Year 2000
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

THE '90S FANBOY war between Street Fighter and Mortal Kombat fans is well-trodden territory, but anyone who really took their fighting games seriously knew that the true rivals to Capcom's Street Fighter titles – at least in terms of the quality of their fighting mechanics – were the various fighting games released by Neo-Geo manufacturer SNK. The likes of The King of Fighters and Fatal Fury were held in high regard by the fighting game community, and it was generally considered that Capcom and SNK were fierce enemies. So when it was announced that the two would actually be collaborating and each making their own series of crossover games – Capcom vs SNK, and SNK vs Capcom respectively – minds on both sides of the divide were collectively blown.

While the SNK-developed games were mostly handheld fighting and card-battling titles, Capcom did what it knew best and released a full-on arcade fighting game featuring a variety of fighters from the Capcom and SNK rosters. To make sure fans of either series wouldn't feel left out, it even gave players a choice of 'grooves', which allowed them to pick the fighting mechanics they were most used to: the Capcom groove is based on the Street Fighter Alpha games while the SNK groove is based on The King of Fighters 98.

The game's roster consists of 33 fighters (including unlockables), spanning both publishers' fighting game stables. Naturally, the Capcom side consists almost entirely of

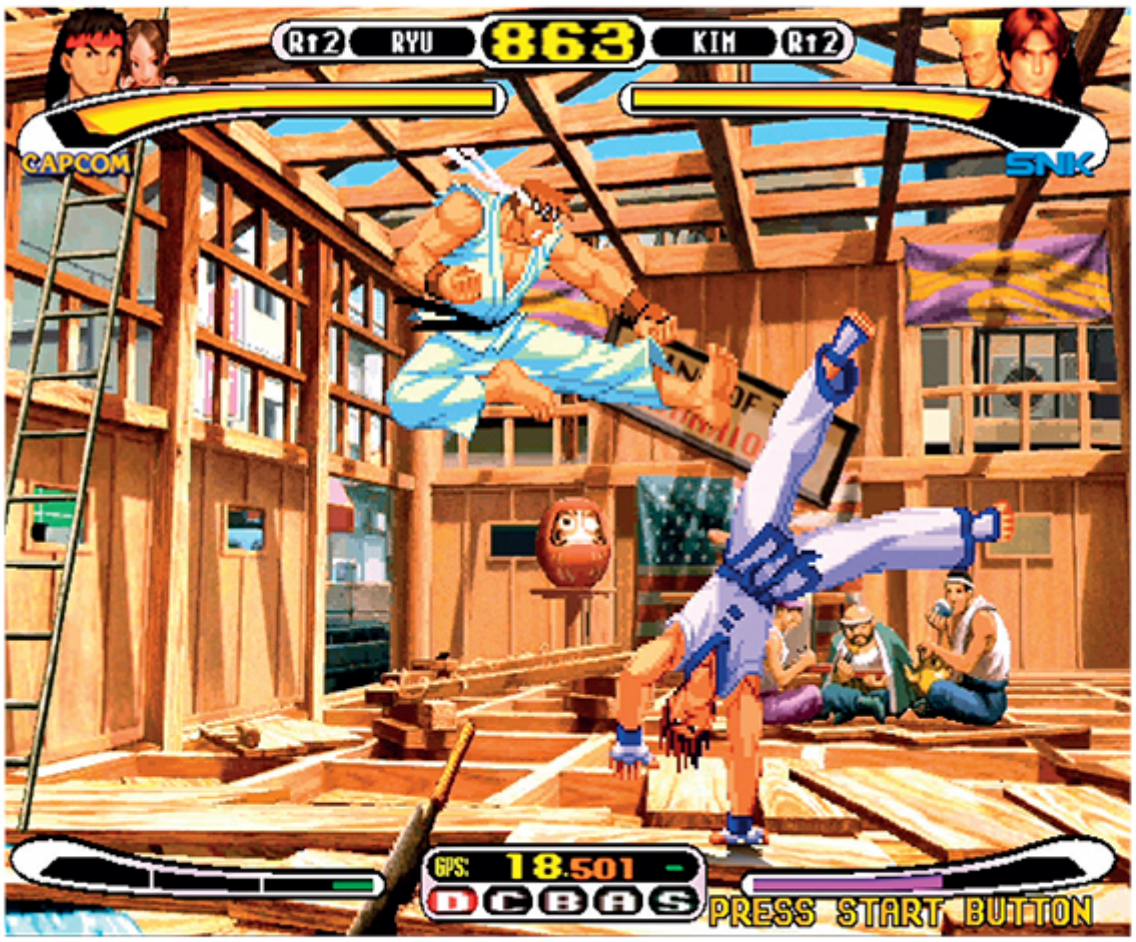
Street Fighter characters, but also includes Morrigan from Darkstalkers as a secret character. SNK, meanwhile, has a roster covering The King of Fighters, Art of Fighting, Fatal Fury and Samurai Shodown. Fights use a King of Fighters style team format in which players choose a number of characters, select the order in which they want to use them, then keep fighting until one team's fighters have all been defeated. The twist, however, is that there's a tier system in place, where each character has a specific 'ratio' value between 1 and 4.

Players can only spend 4 ratio points, meaning they can have as many as four fighters in their team or as few as just one extremely powerful one. Do you go for four weaker 1-point characters like Blanka, Dhalsim, Cammy and Benimaru, or just take the monstrously powerful 4-point Akuma (once he's unlocked)? Or do you go for something in the middle: maybe Ryu and Terry Bogard, who are 2 points each? It's an interesting system that adds a wealth of strategic consideration to the mix.

Ultimately, Capcom vs SNK was well received by fans on both sides of the divide, and the Dreamcast port in particular was praised because of its near-imperceptible load times, its flawless performance and its VGA support making its impressive pixel art animations really stand out. Fans of 2D fighting games with a Dreamcast, then, should consider it one of the console's essential titles… unless you're willing to import the Japan-only sequel, which can be found in the second half of this book. ■

FACT

According to pixel art supervisor Toyohisa Tanabe, the game allowed Capcom and SNK developers to meet each other, which resulted in many nights out drinking and a surprising number of Yu-Gi-Oh card tournaments.



CARRIER

Year	2000
Publisher	Jaleco
Developer	Jaleco

IN THE EARLY twenty-first century, the world's power has generally shifted to the nations in the northern hemisphere, to the extent that those in the south are suffering an energy crisis and possible starvation. In an attempt to prevent southern terrorist or military attacks on the north, a sort of north-only NATO equivalent called the NTA is formed. All is well until the NTA's flagship, the *Heimdal*, is sent on a mission to pick up an ancient organism from an island in the South Pacific. After collecting the organism, the ship reports an explosion in the engine room, and after that… silence. The NTA sends out an investigative team but they too stop communicating, so a second team is sent out to see what's going on. You initially play as Sergeant Jack Ingles, a member of this back-up team whose brother Robert is on the *Heimdal*. Jack volunteered to be on the team so he could find his brother, but he finds a lot more than that, as it turns out the organism on the ship (which is known as ARK) is on the loose, infecting its crew and turning them into hideous, deadly mutants. It's up to Jack to find out what's happened and contain ARK to make sure it doesn't spread beyond the *Heimdal* and infect the entire world.

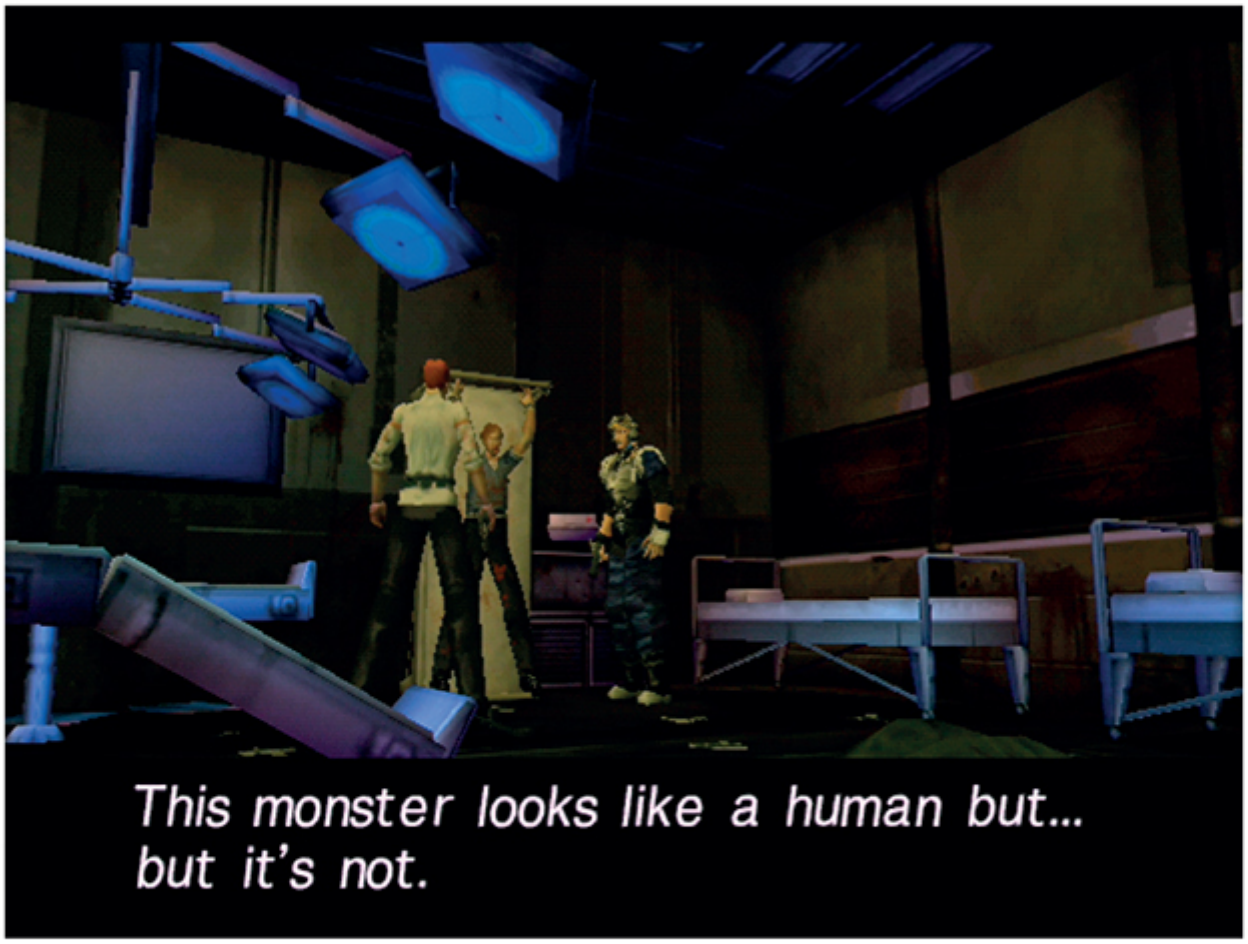
Carrier was notable for being entirely polygonal, a feat that had only been accomplished by a handful of survival horror games at the time (it was released a month before Resident Evil Code: Veronica, which was one of the first high-profile games

to pull it off). Although this obviously meant the game wasn't restricted to a series of pre-rendered camera angles and instead allowed for a free-moving camera, it also led to what was one of the game's most unique gimmicks: the ability to aim at specific body parts. When targeting an enemy, players were shown parts of their body that can potentially be blown off. By aiming at these sections you could remove arms, legs, even torsos at times. Here's the tricky part: much like the organism in The Thing, it isn't immediately obvious when a human is infected by ARK until they attack you. Luckily, you're also armed with the BEM-T3, a scope you can look through to see who's actually a monster (just like in They Live… it owes a lot to John Carpenter, basically).

FACT

If you think Jessifer Manning is a much sillier name than Jack Ingles, it isn't quite as clear-cut in Japan where the latter is known as Jack Eaglefeather (or Eaglefather, as the manual spells it).

Carrier has two playable protagonists, but it differs from the likes of Resident Evil 1 & 2 games in that it doesn't let the player choose which one to play as. Instead, only once you complete the game as Jack do you then get to play through it again as his team-mate Jessifer Manning (yes, Jessifer). Part of her campaign takes place in areas of the ship Jack couldn't access, but part of it sees her exploring sections Jack had already visited: if you collected all the ammo during your first playthrough it isn't there for Jessifer to collect, meaning players have to be frugal the first time around to make the second playthrough more manageable. ■



CENTIPEDE

Year 1999
Publisher Atari Interactive / Hasbro Interactive
Developer Leaping Lizard software

WHEN HASBRO INTERACTIVE bought the Atari branding and IP in February 1998, it announced that same month that it was forming a new publisher called Atari Interactive that would focus on making retro-themed remakes. The first of these was Centipede, based on the classic 1981 Atari arcade game in which players had to destroy a series of large bugs as they moved down the screen. Whereas the original game was a strictly single-screen affair, the remake consists of numerous scrolling stages and even has a story. You play as Wally Gudmunzsun, a 'simple bean counter' from the land of Weedom who's chosen by a magic stick to fly The Shooter, a special weapon designed to be used every 100 years to destroy the swarms of armoured beasts that emerge from the Earth's core to try and take over. Now you know why the original didn't have a story. Despite all this nonsense the game's Adventure mode does still play a lot like the arcade original, with the major differences being that everything's now in polygonal 3D and each stage consists of a number of different areas where centipedes can appear. Along the way you can collect power-ups that give you a shield, invulnerability or upgrades for your gun (a triple shot, spray shot, that sort of thing). If all these extraneous additions feel a bit much, there's also the option to play Classic mode, which is a pretty faithful port of the 1981 original. ■

FACT

The first stage is called the Firth of Fifth, which is a pun on the Firth of Forth, where several Scottish rivers can be found. It's a bit niche if you aren't Scottish.

CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER

Year 2000
Publisher Mattel / Game Studios
Developer Krome Studios

THERE HAVEN'T BEEN many video games dedicated to surfing over the years, with most retro fans pointing to California Games as perhaps the best depiction of the sport. Championship Surfer is one of the rare attempts at making a game solely about surfing, but critical reception perhaps explains why there haven't been many since. As was extreme sports video game law in the Tony Hawk era, the game features a selection of real-life surfing pros, including Cory Lopez, Rochelle Ballard and John John Florence (who's presumably so good they named him twice). It's set on a fictional island in the middle of the South Pacific, and features a selection of game modes, from a simple Free Surf to a Championship mode, to a multiplayer mode called Rumble where up to four players try to get the highest score while taking each other out with power-ups. Perhaps in an attempt to make things more interesting in a sport with not much variety other than the types of waves you face, the game throws in various odd hazards such as mines to give you something to avoid while trying to pull off your best tricks. The UK's *Official Dreamcast Magazine* was ever so slightly disappointed by the game, giving it a score of 2/10 and declaring it 'a total waste of time, money, plastic, electricity and paper'. Which is a bit harsh on the guy who wrote the manual, because as far as manuals go it's fine. ■

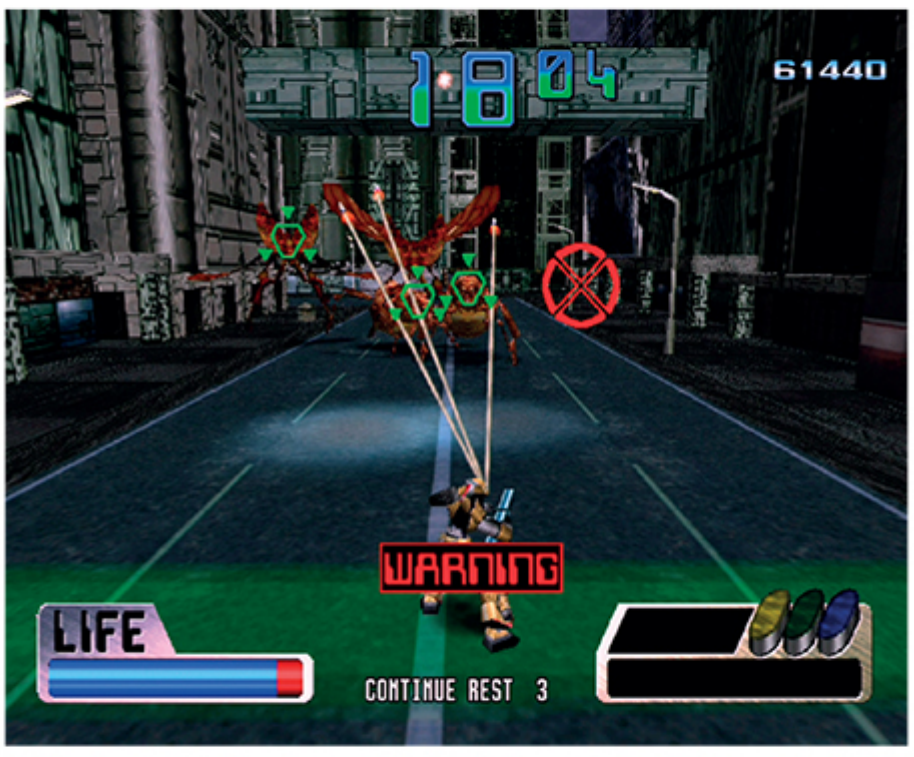
FACT

Early previews of the game referred to it as Billabong Pro Surfing, then it was known as O'Neill Championship Surfer for a while. It appears it tried but failed to lock down a title sponsor.

CHARGE 'N BLAST

Year 2000
Publisher Xicat Interactive / SIMS
Developer CRI

SET IN A futuristic world where hordes of aliens have arrived to take over the Earth, this game has you choosing between three characters – fearless veteran Johnny Rock, the powerful Nicholas Woods or the swift Pamela Hewitt – and jumping into their custom mech suit as you try to destroy the enemy. Each character has three different weapons, and the main twist (as not-so-subtly teased in the game's title) is that each of these weapons has to be charged before it can be fired. While you can fire before a weapon's fully charged it won't be as powerful, though it should be enough for weaker enemies. A good player, then, knows when to switch to the weapons that are best suited for each situation. There's another issue to contend with, though: your suit uses up energy at an absurd rate, so you have to destroy the enemies as quickly as possible. As you defeat each wave you're given an energy power-up that tops it up for a while, but if you spend too long wiping out your enemies you'll run out of juice and it's Game Over. It's a timer, in other words. Despite the way its initially awkward control scheme takes a while to get used to, the fact that Charge 'N Blast only has five stages, has a countdown timer, its filled with bombastic explosions and can be finished in 15–20 minutes once you get good at it means it fits perfectly with the rest of the Dreamcast's coin-op heavy game library. ■



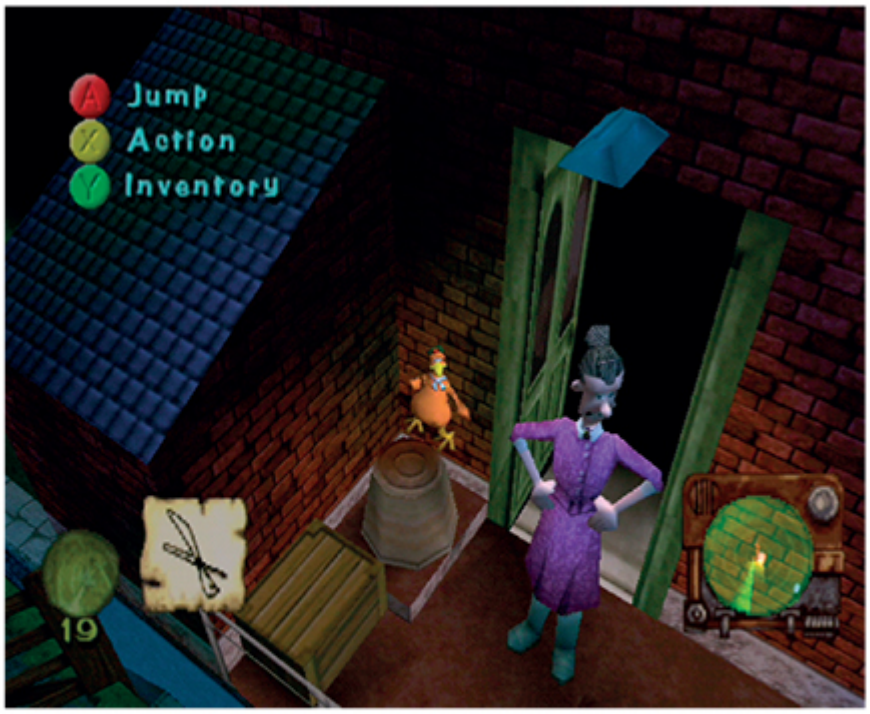
FACT

Charge 'N Blast has a two-player co-op mode where both players share a life meter, so if your pal is rubbish then I'm afraid they're bringing you down with them.

CHICKEN RUN

Year 2000
Publisher Eidos Interactive
Developer Blitz Games

CREATED BY WALLACE & Gromit studio Aardman Animations, the *Chicken Run* movie was such a huge success that it became the highest-grossing stop-motion animated film in history (take that, *Frankenweenie*). The game follows the plot of the movie relatively closely as players have to help a group of chickens break out of their farm and escape to freedom. At different parts of the game players take control of Ginger the chicken, Rocky the rooster or Nick and Fletcher (a pair of Cockney rats) as their escape plan is carried out. The game is split into three distinct acts: the first has the team trying to build a disguise that makes them look like the evil Mrs Tweedy, the second has them making a seesaw, catapult and fireworks as they come up with possible escape ideas, and the third has them trying to build a flying machine called the 'crate'. Each section consists mainly of stealth gameplay as players take on tasks and collect items while avoiding floodlights and guard dogs. An on-screen radar lets you see the hazards around you so you can carefully navigate the farm without being spotted. It's basically what you'd get if you crossed Metal Gear Solid with stop-motion animated farm animals, which is a combination everyone must have considered at some point in their lives. The game also has a number of FMV sequences showing scenes from the movie, in case you hadn't seen it and needed some context as to why you were taking on each mission. ■



FACT

Scottish actor Lynn Ferguson, who plays Mac, is one of only a couple of actors who voiced their character in both the movie and the game. Her older brother is comedian Craig Ferguson.

CHUCHU ROCKET!

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sonic Team

ALTHOUGH THE ABILITY to connect the Dreamcast online was one of the game's big selling points, developers wouldn't truly know how well the service worked until it was in the hands of the public and being played in large enough numbers. As former Sonic Team head Yuji Naka later confirmed, ChuChu Rocket! was mainly created for the purposes of testing the console's online capability to see how well it worked and spot any potential issues the team could learn from for its next big project, Phantasy Star Online. Indeed, in order to stress-test the game's online performance, ChuChu Rocket! was actually given away for free in Europe to all players who had visited Sega's Dreamarena online service.

The game tells the story of the ChuChus, little space mice who inhabit a faraway Space Port in their thousands. The ChuChus were happily minding their own business until the Space Port became infested by a bunch of KapuKapus, which – as bad luck would have it – are space cats. Sensing that this could likely result in a little mousey bloodbath, the ChuChus decide that the best course of action is to leave the Space Port by heading straight for the nearest rocket they can find and blasting off to safety.

It's up to the player to make sure the ChuChus can reach a rocket and escape before they're eaten by the KapuKapus, but the twist is that you don't have direct control over them.

Instead, all you can do is place little arrows on the floor, which the obedient ChuChus will follow as they pass over them. By placing the right arrows in the right locations, you'll be able to guide the ChuChus to the rockets, but you have to be careful because the arrows also affect the KapuKapus' movement.

This simple arrow-placing mechanic is used for each of the game's five main modes. 4-Player Battle, Team Battle and Network all have a similar purpose: four players (or two teams of two) are given their own coloured rocket, which is placed on a stage filled with a steady stream of ChuChus and KapuKapus. Players have to place arrows to guide as many mice into their own rocket while guiding cats into their opponents' rockets. While multiplayer was Sonic Team's main focus, there are also a couple of solo modes: Stage Challenge can be played alone or co-op with a friend and gives a series of tasks which have to be performed within 30 seconds: this usually means guiding the ChuChus to their rockets, but can sometimes be something different, such as getting the KapuKapus to eat them all. Finally, there's Puzzle mode, in which players have to guide all the ChuChus to safety using a very limited number of specific arrow pieces.

ChuChu Rocket may not be one of the most visually spectacular Dreamcast games but on a console that had more than its fair share of top-notch multiplayer games it speaks volumes that many consider it one of the best competitive titles available for the system. ■

FACT

Japan got a limited edition version of the game which came bundled with a special orange Dreamcast controller.

COASTER WORKS

Year 1999
Publisher Xicat Interactive
Developer Bimboosoft

THERE HAVE BEEN a number of amusement park simulation games over the years, the most notable being Theme Park and Rollercoaster Tycoon. Where Coaster Works differs – if the name wasn't already a big enough clue – is that rather than being a general theme park management game, it instead puts you in charge of a very specific task: making rollercoasters. The game revolves entirely around the creation of a series of increasingly more complex coasters, starting off with basic efforts consisting solely of climbs and dips, and culminating in elaborate monstrosities riddled with loops and corkscrews. Using a surprisingly detailed but intuitive blueprint mode, players can construct their own tracks by joining together pieces (rotating and twisting them as they see fit) and viewing the plan from a number of different angles. Once the track has been completed the game then lets you test it by viewing the ride from the first-person perspective of an 'ultra-realistic dummy' ('it even screams'), which lets you see just how death-defying your new creation is. And when I say death-defying, I'm not exaggerating too much: your test run is followed by a report breaking down the ride stats (speed, G-force etc), followed by a list of how many people on your ride are likely to get queasy, throw up, black out(!) or even lose their memory. Which, I suppose, is probably best finding out at that stage rather than when the actual thing is built and opens in the park. ■

FACT

The Japanese version was known as Jet Coaster Dream, and got a sequel, which can be found in the Japanese section of this book.

CONFLICT ZONE

Year 2001
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Mathématiques Appliquées SA

BY THE YEAR 2010, the United Nations and NATO have been dissolved and have been replaced by the ICP: that's the International Corps for Peace, not the Insane Clown Posse. Not every nation is part of the ICP, though, and so GHOST – a secret group of independent countries and large multinational corporations – is formed to stir up the international scene, discredit the ICP and prevent it from making deals that would affect the interests of GHOST's members. That's the background to Conflict Zone, a real-time strategy game that lets players take on two different campaigns: Guardians of the Peace (where you control the ICP) and The Power of Darkness (where you're in charge of GHOST). While for the most part the game plays like your typical RTS, the main twist here is that players have three different resources they need to juggle: command points, energy and popularity. Command points are what's used to construct new buildings and vehicles and equip troops, while generators are required to make sure there's enough energy to power all your buildings. It's popularity that's most interesting though: you need a certain popularity percentage to buy buildings or units, and each side can affect their popularity in different ways. The ICP gets brownie points for creating refugee camps and saving civilians, while GHOST can gain popularity by recruiting local villagers and turning them into soldiers, then using a propaganda cameraman to take photos of victory scenes (and getting them out of the way pronto when a battle is lost). ■

FACT

According to some early magazine coverage, Conflict Zone was originally going to be named Peacemakers. Its eventual title probably makes more sense given that you get to play as either side.

CONFIDENTIAL MISSION

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Hitmaker

BY THE TIME Confidential Mission arrived on the scene, Sega had already established two separate light gun series in the arcades: Sega AM2's Virtua Cop, and Sega AM1's House of the Dead. Each had received two games before AM3 – renamed Hitmaker in 2000 – got its own bite at the light gun cherry with Confidential Mission, a game that is arguably just as entertaining as Sega's other shooters but wasn't anywhere near as popular.

While Virtua Cop was based on police shootouts and The House of the Dead focused on zombies, Confidential Mission is instead Sega's take on James Bond-style spy thrillers. Players take control of secret agent Howard Gibson, a blatant Bond-a-like who's always got a terrible one-liner in his pocket. Gibson is joined by Jean Clifford, another agent with 'the figure of a supermodel' (the manual's words, not mine) who's controlled by Player 2 in co-op. The World Coalition's spy satellite has been taken over, so the pair have been sent on a top secret mission to find out who's responsible and stop them. Well, as 'top secret' as a mission can be when it involves shooting countless people.

The game consists of three lengthy stages, each covering a different stage of the mission. First the duo have to make their way through the Archaeological Museum in search of the satellite hijacker. After that they have to board a speeding train to rescue the satellite's programmer, who's been kidnapped. Once you rescue her it's off to the final showdown at the terrorists' headquarters to retreive the satellite control system.

For the most part Confidential Mission is business as usual with your typical lightgun tropes: shooting off-screen to reload (or pressing a button if you're using a controller), innocent people popping up at the least convenient times (usually just as you have an enemy lined up in your sights) and laughably awful voice acting. Along the way there are also brief skill tests – such as one moment where you're given a rope launcher to reach another area, but only have one shot – and the game will branch to different locations depending on how well you do.

FACT

By beating all 30 missions in the game's difficult Agent Academy bonus mode, players can replace the agents' guns with Sega light guns.

While gunning down countless baddies is obviously the priority here, Confidential Mission does offer bonus points for offing your foes in particular ways, though they do seem to contradict each other. You can get extra points for a 'Justice Shot', which involves sparing an enemy's life and simply shooting their gun out of their hand. After all, as the manual puts it, 'true agents should accomplish their missions with style'. However, you can also get extra points for a 'Combo Shot', which rewards you with shooting the same enemy up to three times, because the manual also claims that 'true agents ought to totally punish those who threaten the world peace'. Make your mind up, mate. Once you've mastered the main game, there's a secret Another World mode which changes the order in which the enemies appear. ■

CRAZY TAXI

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Hitmaker

ASK ANYONE TO put together their top five Dreamcast games and Crazy Taxi will almost always be in there (assuming they've played it, of course). Hitmaker's preposterous pre-Uber passenger pickup plaything was one of the most iconic releases of the era, not only because of the quality of the game itself but because it was one of the most potent examples of what was becoming a turning point in video games: home console games that looked just as good as the sort of thing you'd seen in arcades.

Originally released as a coin-op in early 1999, Crazy Taxi's title perfectly sums up its contents, offering ridiculous levels of mayhem from the moment the announcer shouts 'here we go'. Players control one of four cabbies – hot-headed, green-haired punk Axel, cool and collected Gena, cheerful musician B.D. Joe and 40-something drifter Gus – as they head off on their shift as a taxi driver. The aim is simple, even if in practice it's anything but: drive around town, pick up passengers and take them to their destination before their timer runs out (at which point they get annoyed and leap out of the cab, leaving you without a fare).

It's character that drives the entire game, and not just in terms of the four playable drivers. Every aspect of the game is dripping with personality, from the different passengers who jump in your car and shout abuse at you every time you crash – which you will, a lot – to the enthusiastic announcer who bookends your run with his aforementioned holler at the start and an impassioned appraisal of your work at the end.

It's the city itself that's arguably the most important 'character' in the game though, and one you get to know intimately with repeated play. From its officially licensed stores – passengers may ask to visit the likes of KFC, Pizza Hut, Tower Records, Levi and FILA – to its distinct regions, this brilliantly designed environment, clearly based on San Francisco, is so well-made that many players can still picture its map layout in their head years after playing.

FACT

Clear all the Crazy Box missions and you unlock a bike-powered rickshaw which is just as fast as the standard taxis, adding even further to the game's silliness factor.

It would be impossible to discuss Crazy Taxi without mentioning its music. Consisting of numerous tracks by The Offspring and Bad Religion, the punk-rock vibe is a perfect fit for a game that has you recklessly leaping off huge jumps, smashing through traffic and powersliding across great shortcuts with clear disregard for the Highway Code. When later ports of the game replaced the music, it's not a stretch to say the experience suffered as a result.

The Dreamcast version built on the arcade game by adding an entirely new second city, as well as a Crazy Box mode where the player is given a series of short missions like doing a long jump, knocking over bowling pins or delivering a set number of passengers within an extremely tight time limit. It's a testament to how Hitmaker nailed it right on its first go, however, that the standard city with Arcade rules remains the definitive way to play. ■

CRAZY TAXI 2

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Hitmaker

AT FIRST GLANCE Crazy Taxi 2 offers more of the same as its predecessor, but as soon as you start playing it's clear that there have been a lot of changes here. The most obvious of these is the move to a completely new city: while the first game was based on San Francisco, it doesn't take a cartographer to figure out that the two new areas here, Around Apple and Small Apple, are based on New York. It's a somewhat trickier city to navigate, because the arrow that points players to their destination often doesn't take into account the rather large buildings in the way: this was an issue in some areas in the first game but is more widespread here, meaning city memorisation is key for success.

The basic premise is the same – you're still picking up passengers and taking them to their destinations – but practically every element of the gameplay has been furnished with new features. If you were a fan of the cabbies in the first game then you're out of luck because they aren't here (well, at least at first). They've been replaced by nihilistic cool guy Slash, shirtless sourpuss Iceman, cheery teenager Cinnamon and 78-year-old former stuntman Hot-D. The original four can be unlocked via the game's mission-based Crazy Pyramid mode, but most of them have new voice actors.

Once you're on the road, a new move called the Crazy Hop has been added. This lets you jump by pressing the Y button and is an extremely

useful new tool because it lets you clear traffic jams and reach higher bridges for useful shortcuts. There are also new licensed shops dotted around the city: gone are the previous game's helpings of KFC, Pizza Hut and the like, replaced by such boutiques as FAO Schwarz, HMV, Gap, Burger King and Hard Rock Cafe. And speaking of rock, The Offspring returns with a new suite of songs, and are joined this time by Methods of Mayhem, the short-lived rap-rock band set up by Mötley Crüe drummer Tommy Lee.

Easily the most game-changing addition to Crazy Taxi 2, however, are the group pick-ups. Whereas in the first game players were limited to picking up a single passenger and taking them to their destination before they could collect someone else, this time there are some groups standing around with blue circles under them. Picking these up sees you filling your taxi with two, three or even four passengers at a time, along with a lengthy time limit to take them each to a separate destination. These runs have notable risks and rewards: your score multiplies by the number of passengers you have in your car, but if you fail to get even one person to their destination before the group timer runs out, you lose all your fare. Each new feature combines to make Crazy Taxi 2 a fresher take on the concept, but most fans tend to prefer the first game for its map design. ■

FACT

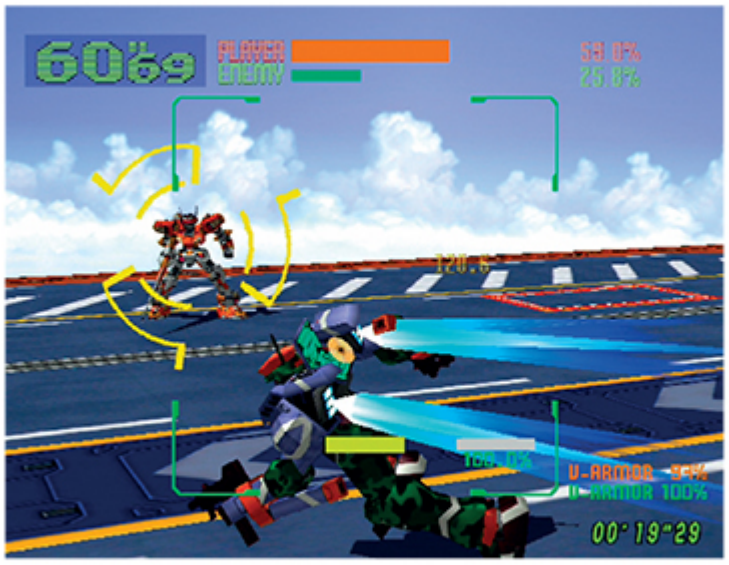
Crazy Taxi 2 is technically a Dreamcast exclusive (at the time of writing), but in 2007 the PSP got Crazy Taxi: Fare Wars, which included the cities from the first two games.

CYBER TROOPERS VIRTUAL-ON ORATORIO TANGRAM

Year	1999
Publisher	Activision
Developer	Sega AM3

IT'S ALL WELL and good pretending you're a taxi driver or a blue hedgehog, but sometimes you just want to control a giant robot as it smashes bits out of another giant robot. This was the logic behind Virtual On, a 1996 arcade game which saw a Sega Saturn release that same year. Virtual On was enough of a success that it spawned a sequel, one with a far more complicated title (not least because of the cheeky hyphen thrown in for a laugh). Cyber Troopers Virtual-On Oratorio Tangram M.S.B.S. Ver 5.4 – to give it its full name – once again has you climbing into the sizeable frame of one of a selection of Virtuaroids, enormous combat vehicles designed to blow each other up with gusto.

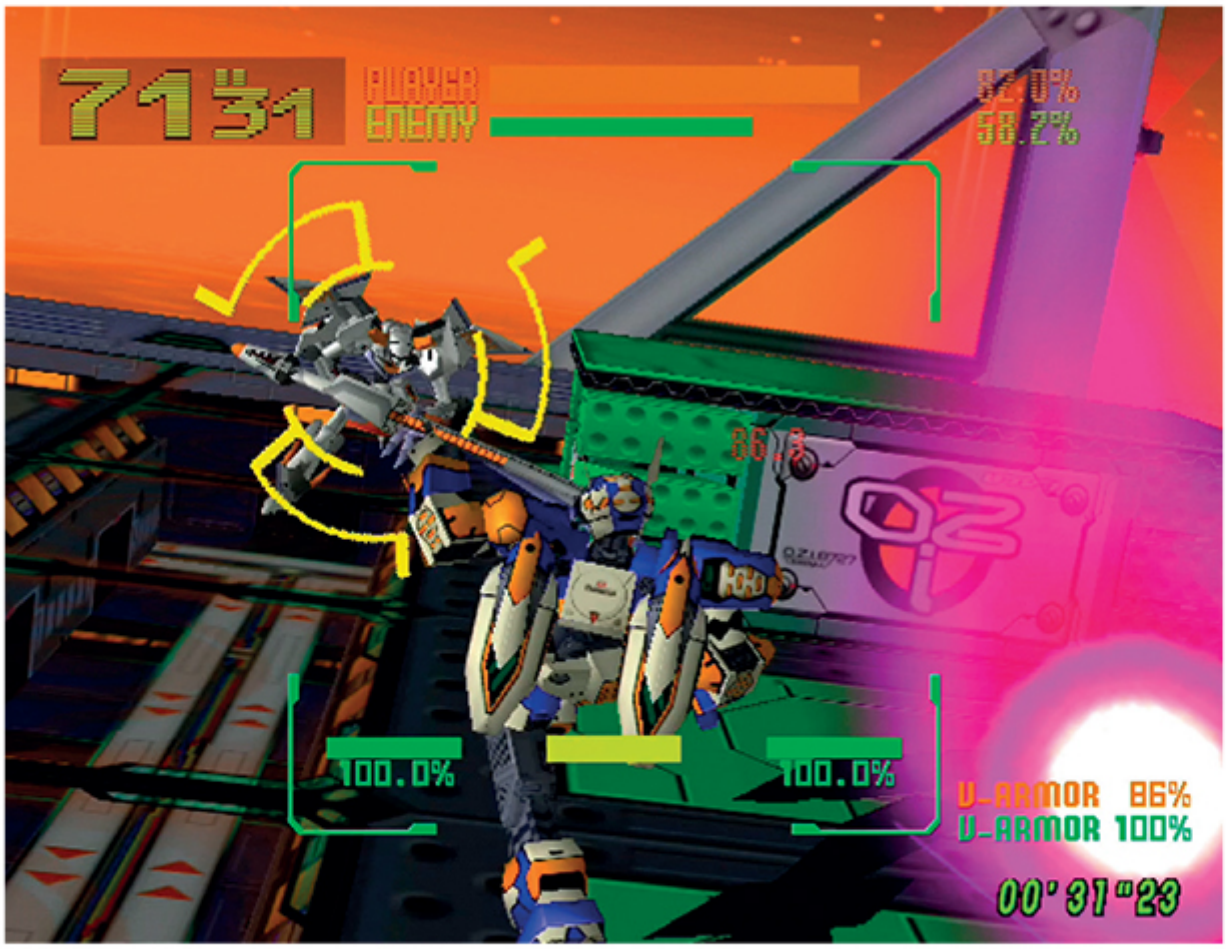
The game is set 20 years after the events of the first Virtual On, and tells the story of the titular Tangram, an AI that it's believed could 'control the laws of causality' and allow complete domination for any group that finds it. Representing one of two factions – the DNA or RNA – you have to pick a Virtuaroid and fight your way through a bunch of other Virtuaroids until you reach the 10th battle, at which point you go one on one with the Tangram itself. The game is played from a third-person perspective and is essentially a one-on-one fighting game set in a series of obstacle-filled arenas. Navigating these stages is as important as the combat itself, because walls and columns can be used as cover to protect yourself from your opponent's attacks. The aim, naturally, is to wear down the other Virtuaroid's energy until they eventually explode. Each Virtuaroid is armed with three different weapons, which ensures they all feel quite different to control. Specineff, for example, has a boomerang and a 'long launcher' which can take a long time to charge, meaning it isn't ideal for long-range combat. It is, however, extremely fast and its third weapon is a ruddy big scythe, meaning if you can get close enough to your opponent you can do a lot of damage up close.



FACT

The weird Ver 5.4 title is because this is actually the second version of the sequel. Ver 5.2 and Ver 5.6 were released in arcades, each with different balancing tweaks.

The main issue some players had with CTVOOTMSBSV5.4 (as the cool kids call it) is that the arcade versions of Virtual On were built with two joysticks in mind – one for movement and one for aiming – and the Dreamcast controller only had one stick. As it did with the Saturn version, Sega released a special controller with two massive joysticks, but its price and the fact it was only designed for a single game meant most players made do with the standard controller and its awkward turning (the analogue stick requires you to move exactly left or right to turn, and won't do it if you aren't exact). If you plan on playing the game, take this advice: switch your control scheme to Type-B. This lets you move around with the D-Pad as normal, and to turn you hold the A button and press left and right on the D-Pad. This makes the game immeasurably more playable. ■



D2

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Warp

JAPANESE STUDIO WARP tried an unusual thing during the '90s. It created a 'digital actor' called Laura, who would appear in its games as different characters. In the first D she played Laura Harris, a girl in a haunted hospital, and in Enemy Zero she was Laura Lewis, in a monster-ridden space station. D2, which has nothing to do with the first, sees her as Laura Parton, who wakes up from a plane crash (following an attempted terrorist hijacking) to find herself in the snowy Canadian wilderness. Which also happens to be infested by monsters, because why not. Laura heads out in search of help, while trying to fend off the creatures she encounters along the way. D2 is generally played from a third-person perspective, but switches to first-person any time you enter an explorable room or encounter an enemy. Laura can also go hunting – caribou, moose, hare and snow grouse freely roam the land – and collect meat which can then be cooked for energy. Eventually she also gains access to a snowmobile, allowing for faster travel. D2 was something of an epic for its time, given that it came on four discs, though much of this was down to the copious helpings of cutscenes and dialogue. Critics were divided on D2, with some praising its ambition and downright oddness, and others criticising its slow pace and repetitive gameplay. If you have the patience for it, there can be no denying that whether you love or hate it, it's certainly one of the more unique experiences you'll play. ■

FACT

D2 was originally going to be a completely different game, in which Laura was pregnant on the plane and when it crashed the Devil sent her unborn son to Transylvania. You then played as her adult son trying to fight the Devil.

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX

Year 2000
Publisher Acclaim Max Sports
Developer Z-Axis

THE ENORMOUS SUCCESS of Activision's Tony Hawk's Pro Skater series inspired other publishers to get a piece of the extreme sports action. Acclaim, with its new Max Sports brand, decided to enlist the services of (the now late) Dave Mirra in the hope that he could do for BMX (and Acclaim's bottom line) what Tony Hawk did for skateboarding. Developer Z-Axis was no stranger to extreme sports – it had already developed Rockstar's Thrasher: Skate and Destroy on PlayStation – so it was a fine fit for Acclaim's bike-based Hawk-a-like. As in its inspiration, players choose from a selection of real-life extreme sports personalities and are then given free rein to bike around a series of open areas, pulling off tricks and combos. There are 12 stages in total – six 'challenge' levels where you tick off a series of objectives, and six 'competition' levels where you're scored based on the complexity and diversity of your moves. As is the norm for games of its ilk there's a suitably rocking soundtrack, with contributions from the likes of Cypress Hill, Deftones, Social Distortion, Sublime, Rancid, Pennywise and Dropkick Murphys. It also wouldn't be an extreme sports game without some form of silly unlockables, and sure enough players who are good enough will be able to unlock Slim Jim Man, an extremely skinny character designed to promote Slim Jim beef snacks. I should stress that other beef snacks are available (just not necessarily in Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX). ■

FACT

The game got a sequel, and was going to have another until Mirra pulled out because of the third game's sexual content. It was eventually released Mirra-free as the controversial BMX XXX.

DAYTONA USA 2001

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega / Hasbro Interactive
Developer	Amusement Vision

IT'S HARD TO overstate just how much of an impact Daytona USA made when it was first released in arcades in 1994. As the first game on Sega's Model 2 arcade board, it completely blew Sega's already groundbreaking Virtua Racing out of the water, surpassing its basic polygonal graphics with detailed, texture-mapped cars and environments. The game became one of the most iconic coin-op titles of all time and there was a period during the mid '90s where practically every arcade worth its salt had at least one Daytona machine (and some had two, four or even eight linked together for multiplayer races). The inevitable home versions followed, with Sega having a couple of cracks at it on the Mega Drive and Saturn, but each of these received criticism for different reasons. This Dreamcast port, released six years after the original hit arcades, attempts to finally provide players with a definitive Daytona experience at home, but it still has its issues.

Whereas the arcade Daytona had three tracks to choose from, the 2001 edition boasts eight. There's the original three, the two added to the Championship Circuit Edition on Saturn, and another three entirely new ones: Circuit Pixie (which is just a simple oval), the narrow Rin Rin Rink and the figure 8-shaped Mermaid Lake. The iconic blue Hornet car that's synonymous with Daytona is naturally your default choice as usual, but you can choose between a few other cars – the Grasshopper, Falcon and Lightning – each with their own handling, acceleration and top speed stats. Things get a little sillier when you unlock the bonus cars, which start fairly sensibly with the metallic Unicorn and the Red Cat safety car, both of which are still conventional-looking modern cars. Then you get into odder unlockables like the tiny three-wheeled Pywackett Barchetta bubble car, the retro-looking Rule of the Ninth car and the frankly absurd Javelin (a rocket car that can't really be steered too well).

FACT

The PAL version of the game never had online multiplayer in the first place, so at least Europeans were spared the disappointment of having it for a short while then losing it.

On paper, then, 2001 appears to be the definitive edition of one of the most iconic arcade games ever created. In practice, however, critics and players alike noted that the car handling in the Dreamcast port is far more sensitive than it was in arcades, making the game feel different at best and near-unplayable at worst (to those particularly sensitive to such matters). Players can adjust controller sensitivity in the Options menu but even at its lowest many cars are prone to slipping into wild powerslides with inaccurate frequency. Playing the game with a Dreamcast steering wheel is a far more satisfying experience, but this obviously wasn't the setup the majority of players had.

One thing the game did have, however, was online multiplayer… at least for a brief period. In a bizarre turn of events, the servers' specific IP address was included in the game's code, and the game had to connect to that IP address for online racing. The problem is, the network block containing that IP belonged to AT&T, and when Sega switched to another server provider it had to give the block up, killing the online multiplayer permanently. ■

DEAD OR ALIVE 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Tecmo
Developer	Team Ninja

THE DEAD OR Alive series has received something of a reputation over the years for being a more titillating take (if you'll pardon the expression) on the one-on-one fighting genre. It certainly can't be denied that the game's emphasis on scantily clad female fighters and its particularly strong focus on… um, bounciness physics, if you catch my meaning, has resulted in many dismissing the game as pervy nonsense that can't be played in front of certain family members for fear of dying of shame. Much like those who used to claim they bought Playboy for the articles however, anyone who actually takes the time to play Dead or Alive will discover that underneath those skimpy outfits (careful) is a genuinely satisfying fighter that specialises in making even inexperienced players feel like martial arts experts.

The key to this is a fighting system that's more simplified compared to the likes of Street Fighter or Mortal Kombat. Players only have three buttons to worry about: Punch, Kick and 'Free'. Punching and kicking are self explanatory, while the Free button can be used in two different ways. By holding down a direction and pressing it you can perform a throw, while tapping it and pressing the D-Pad away from your opponent simultaneously will attempt a grab. If you grab an opponent's attack at the right height, you will reverse their move into a throw. While most other fighting games of the era only enabled players to block or evade attacks, then, DOA was far more offence-focused, allowing players to use opponents' attacks against them in a way that was relatively easy to pull off and only required good timing. While there are other more complex mechanics in there for experts, that's really all there is to Dead or Alive for the majority of players, and as a result the game is easily one of the more accessible fighters, even to this day.

FACT

In a bizarre crossover, the PS2 disc for DOA 2: Hardcore could be inserted while playing PS2 game Monster Rancher 4, which would let players train up a little monster version of DOA fighter Kasumi.

Dead or Alive 2 builds on its predecessor by adding a few new characters to bring the roster up to 12. New fighters include Ein (a karate expert with amnesia), Helena (a French opera singer) and Leon (an Italian soldier who practises Russian martial arts). Depending on where you lived, though, the roster may have been different. The reason for this is that developer Team Ninja was never completely satisfied with Dead or Alive 2, and kept releasing updated versions in arcades and on PS2. Although technically there was only one release of DOA 2 on the Dreamcast, because the release date was staggered worldwide each new release was updated with more content to bring it in line with the others. As a result, the US Dreamcast version, which was released first, has the least content, with no unlockables and 33 costumes. By the time the game came to Europe an improved version had been released on PS2, so the EU Dreamcast version got 15 extra costumes from that game. It's the Japanese version, released last, that's considered the definitive one on Dreamcast, though, with 71 costumes, a few new stages and two new unlockable characters. ■

DEATH CRIMSON OX

Year 2001
Publisher Sammy Studios
Developer Ecole

THE FIRST DEATH Crimson was released on Sega Saturn in Japan in 1996 and was considered by some to be among the worst games on the console. Not to be deterred, developer Ecole made Death Crimson 2 for the Dreamcast (see the Japanese section of this book) before releasing an updated version in arcades. This update, Death Crimson OX, was also ported to Dreamcast and is the only game in the series to be released in the west. As a lightgun shooter its plot is typically mindless: playing as photojournalist Kou Yanami and student Yuri Rosenberg, you have to rescue Lily, the leader of a resistance movement, who's been kidnapped by a mysterious organisation called SMO. The game claims your enemies are simply SMO agents known as Subliminers, but that sort of falls by the wayside almost immediately as you start facing off against the likes of reanimated skeletons, green-blooded mutants and monster bat things. Naturally, the game can be played using the Dreamcast Gun or a controller, but the latter's control scheme is somewhat unique compared to that of most other console versions of lightgun shooters. While the norm is to simply move the cursor around with the D-Pad or analogue stick, here the cursor's position on the screen is a sort of 1:1 representation of where the stick is. Don't press anything and it sits on the middle of the screen but, for example, move the stick 80% of the way to the right and the cursor will go to that position on the screen, snapping back to the middle when the player lets go. ■

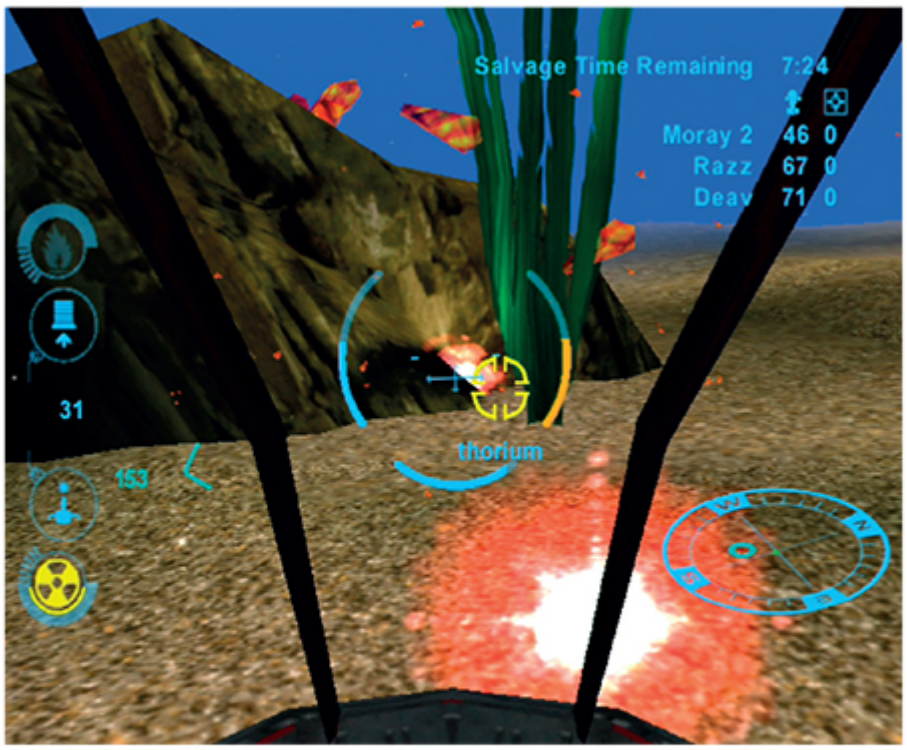
FACT

The first boss is a giant suit of armour armed with a massive sword with odd brown stains on it. The game says this weapon is called 'Sword the Stink'. I'd hope you don't need me to say any more.

DEEP FIGHTER

Year 2000
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Criterion Games

WAY BENEATH THE depths of the ocean lives an underwater colony of tiny human-like people, for whom life isn't going so great. The colony is under threat by the Shadowkin, a hostile group causing them all sorts of aggro. What's worse, their landscape is in danger of being destroyed, so chances are they can't stick around for much longer. You play as 'Moray 2', a pilot who's just graduated from the colony's academy and is highly rated by the Admiral as a potential hotshot 'Deep Fighter'. As a newly recruited cadet in the colony's… well, navy I suppose, you have to head out into the ocean and perform a series of tasks with the ultimate goal being to build a huge ship that will transport the colony safely away from hostile waters so they can rebuild elsewhere. The game takes place from a first-person perspective as you control your own Fighter Sub. It's not all about fighting the Shadowkin: one minute you're drilling for resources, the next you're racing your fellow Defence Force cadets, including Deav, who's played by a then-unknown David Walliams. Sadly, the future Little Britain star and author doesn't have any lines in the game, and can instead be seen regularly scowling at his colleagues. A prototype version of Deep Fighter was discovered in 2021, in which the cutscenes all still had bluescreen backgrounds and revealed that Walliams did indeed have lines at one point, before his character was reduced to '*Star Trek* redshirt' status. ■



FACT

Deep Fighter developer James Kay told me that there were plans to include a VMU mini-game based on side-scrolling shooter Scramble, but it was eventually torpedoed.

DEMOLITION RACER: NO EXIT

Year	2000
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Pitbull Syndicate

AS ONE OF the early million-sellers on the original PlayStation, Destruction Derby was roundly praised for delivering something relatively uncommon to the racing genre: a racer where finishing in first place was less important than doing damage to your opponents along the way. The series enjoyed a few sequels but went oddly unchallenged for the most part, with only one or two studios entering the arena with their own car smash 'em up imitations. British developer Pitbull Syndicate (formerly Midway Studios Newcastle) was one of them, with its soundalike offering Demolition Racer. Originally released on PlayStation in 1999, the game came to the Dreamcast a year later with its new No Exit subtitle and a bunch of new tracks and cars.

It should come as no surprise, then, that Demolition Racer has similar win conditions to the Destruction Derby games. In the main Demolition race type, finishing near the front of the pack is obviously important, but you also gain 'crash points' for smashing into opponents in a variety of ways: spinning them, making them catch fire, landing on them from above or just good old driving straight into them at top speed. Rather than giving extra points, your finishing position instead determines your multiplier, which is combined with your score. Performing in both fields is important, then: for example, if you do 500 points' worth of damage on the track

and finish in first place, you'll get a 25x multiplier and a total score of 12,500. If, however, you only managed to finish in second place but did, say, 700 points of damage, you'll get a 22x multiplier and a score of 15,400, winning the race.

As well as Demolition, there are other race types designed to keep things varied. Chase is more of a straightforward race, while Chicken has some of the cars going round the track in the opposite direction, making head-on collisions more likely. Then there are the bowl competitions – Last Man Standing and No Exit – where the aim is simply to smash everyone else and last as long as possible (the only difference between the two is that the position multiplier comes into play again in No Exit). Perhaps the most unique, however, is the awkwardly named Suicide mode, a bowl race where the opposite rules apply and the aim is to be the first to completely wreck your car.

FACT

Because the Dreamcast Gun wasn't released in North America, most NA games don't recognise it. Demolition Racer does, even though it was never released in a region that got the Gun.

The main new addition to the Dreamcast version is a series of odd unlockable mini-games, such as DR Football (two players try to drive around and bash a crate into their opponent's goal), DR Tennis (Pong, except the bats are replaced with cars, the ball is a wrecking ball and every time you return it you take damage) and Tossers (two players take turns using a catapult to try to land their car on their opponent's). Perhaps the most unique, though, is Big Car Hunter, which lets you plug a Dreamcast Gun in and use it to shoot other cars, drive-by style. ■

DINO CRISIS

Year	2000
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

FOLLOWING THE ENORMOUS success of the first Resident Evil, game director Shinji Mikami and his team decided they wanted to try applying the same framework to a different type of survival horror game, one where the enemies were a little less unrealistic. Only a little, mind. The result was Dino Crisis, a game that can be quickly and simply described as 'Resident Evil with dinosaurs' but deserves a bit more analysis than that.

The game takes place on Ibis Island, where a special research facility is based. When it emerges that a pioneering scientist, once thought dead, is actually conducting a secret weapons project at the facility, the Secret Operation Raid Team sends a group of special agents to investigate. Once there, the team soon discovers that the facility is not only without power but has seemingly been under attack, with torn fences and disembowelled security guards scattered around the premises. Given the game's title, there are no prizes for guessing who's responsible, but how did the prehistoric pests get there? It's up to the player, as one of the agents who goes by the alias Regina, to find out.

Despite the switch of enemy type from zombies to dinosaurs, Dino Crisis still shares a lot of similarities to Resident Evil (not least the fact that everything still wants to eat you). The game has the same 'tank' control system, in which the D-Pad either moves Regina forwards and back or turns her left and right (rather than simply moving her in the direction pressed relative to the camera). Aiming and shooting is still the same, and the whole thing still takes place in a large building with lots of door-opening animations and different keys to find.

That's not to say Dino Crisis doesn't have its differences too, such as the fact that Regina can sometimes start bleeding after an attack. While the typical health gauge from the Resident Evil games carries over, the addition of bleeding adds an extra level of complication because Regina's health will continue to deplete until the player stops the blood with a hemostat. The game's most obvious difference over early Resi games though, is the switch from static cameras and pre-rendered background images to a dynamic camera that moves around a fully polygonal environment. The result of this is not only a game with more exciting action – it's not uncommon to be chased down a long corridor by a raptor while the camera tracks alongside you – but one that looks significantly better on the Dreamcast than on the PlayStation. While it's generally agreed that pre-rendered backgrounds mean that games such as Resident Evil 2 don't look wildly different from system to system, Dino Crisis clearly stands out as superior on Dreamcast, at least on consoles.

FACT

Dino Crisis was conceived when a worker in Capcom's graphics department suggested a game set in King Kong's Skull Island. Mikami liked the idea but, noting that Skull Island didn't have many creatures beyond dinosaurs, opted to stick with those.

Dino Crisis may not have the global reputation that Capcom's other survival horror series does, but its fast-paced dinosaurs and its relentless pace easily make it the more challenging experience. That may not be to everyone's taste, but if you can handle difficult games it's worth hunting down. ■

DINOSAUR

Year 2000
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Paris

DINOSAUR IS BASED on the 2000 Disney film of the same name, which at the time was the most expensive CGI movie ever. The game isn't quite a like-for-like retelling of the film, though, to the extent that one of the main playable characters was barely seen on-screen. Players take control of three separate characters: the main protagonist, Aladar (who's an iguanadon), his newfound lemur friend Zini and a pteranodon called Flia, who only appeared briefly in the film as the pteranodon who dropped Aladar's egg onto the lemurs' island but is now a proper character. To recap: in a game called Dinosaur, only one of the three playable characters is a dinosaur. The trio have to make their way through a series of stages, using their unique abilities to solve puzzles along the way. Aladar has a powerful headbutt that can destroy blocks and fight off certain larger enemies, and he's also the only character able to swim. Zini is small enough to fit into tiny gaps and agile enough to climb vines, and can also throw rocks at enemies. Meanwhile, Flia, being the only flying character, can reach higher sections of the stage and safely scout upcoming areas. It's also possible to combine the characters in a group of two or three: for example, if you come across a large river, you can get Zini to jump on Aladar's back to help him cross it safely. Dinosaur was met with a mixed reception, with some considering it a little short and easy. ■

FACT

The idea for Dinosaur was thought up on the set of *Robocop*(!), when director Paul Verhoeven and effects legend Phil Tippett decided to pitch Disney a stop-motion dinosaur movie. By the time it was released, it was CGI and neither were involved.

DONALD DUCK: QUACK ATTACK

Year 2000
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Casablanca

KNOWN IN NORTH America as Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers, this Ubisoft platformer sees everyone's favourite non-Daffy duck on a quest to rescue everyone's favourite non-princess Daisy. In Quack Attack canon, Daisy is a news reporter who has uncovered the secret temple of the evil magician Merlock. As she presents her live report on TV, Merlock notices and kidnaps her, so both Donald and his smarmy cousin Gladstone Gander head off to rescue her. The game is your typical 3D platformer, taking place in four locations: Duckie Mountain, Duckburg, Magica de Spells' manor and Merlock's secret temple. Each area has four separate stages, each containing a hidden piece of a Boss Warp Pad. Only once Donald has collected the pieces from all four levels can he complete the Warp Pad and take on the boss for that area. Much like Crash Bandicoot, the gameplay switches between fully directional 3D and side-scrolling 2D depending on the level, but the general controls remain the same either way. Each stage also contains four hidden toys belonging to Huey, Dewie and Louie, and if you can collect all 16 toys in an area you'll be given access to a bonus level. As if all the collecting wasn't enough, Gladstone has also a set time to beat on each stage: pull this off in all four stages in a world and you'll unlock a new outfit, allowing you to dress Donald in a Hawaiian shirt, a suit of armour or a soldier costume. While nothing revolutionary, the game was generally accepted to be a fun enough (if easy) platformer. ■

FACT

Gladstone Gander may not see much screen time these days but he was created back in 1948 as the exceptionally lucky rival to the always unlucky Donald.

DRACONUS: CULT OF THE WYRM

Year 2000
Publisher Crave Entertainment
Developer Treyarch

BEFORE IT BECAME known as one of the main studios responsible for the Call of Duty series, Treyarch started off its journey with a couple of sports games and fantasy 'hack and slash' titles. In case you couldn't guess, Draconus (known as Dragon's Blood in Europe) falls firmly in the latter category. More than 100 years after a cataclysmic event called the Backlash destroyed the Parthem Empire's cities and annihilated its wizards and sages, life is grim. An evil stone giant called Rakka is preparing to invade the weakened kingdom so it's up to you to travel across the land and meet with other races in an attempt to gather the three pieces of the Earth Rune which will end Rakka's plans. There are two characters to choose between: Cynric is a warrior who prides himself in his abilities with melee weapons and dabbles with magic in his spare time, while Aeowyn is a sorceress whose magic abilities are second to none and is reasonable with a sword. Although it's a hack and slash game, Draconus places quite a heavy emphasis on defensive play too: players have to regularly hold the A button to raise their shield, and have to do so each time they block an attack (as opposed to just mindlessly holding it down all the time). This makes combat a little more difficult in the early stages of gameplay, as players get used to the timing of each enemy's attacks and learn when it's safe to counter. ■

FACT

Draconus is considered the spiritual successor to Treyarch's PC game Die by the Sword, which has a similar style but gives players full control over their character's sword arm.

DRAGONRIDERS: CHRONICLES OF PERN

Year 2001
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubi Studios UK

BASED ON THE *Dragonriders of Pern* series of fantasy novels by Anne McCaffrey, Chronicles of Pern is a sizeable adventure game in which players take on the role of D'kor, a dragonrider who's been sent on a mission to find a replacement for Nalaya, a 'Weyrwoman' whose death has left the golden dragon Morath without a rider. There are 10 potential candidates for the new Weyrwoman role, so over the course of a four-chapter epic D'kor needs to travel the land in search of the right one. While D'kor has his own massive dragon called Zenth (whose first mission, I kid you not, is to oil his sore backside), he's also accompanied by a tiny green flying creature called a fire lizard. This acts like the game's cursor of sorts: when the fire lizard flies over something that means the player can interact with it, be that picking up an object or talking to another person. Although the game is set in the same world as the *Pern* series, it's not considered canon by fans, not least because it introduces a bunch of new characters exclusive to this particular adventure. Dragonriders was met with a generally negative reaction, with some critics complaining that many of the quests felt more like chores, and others bemoaning the awkward camera angles players had to endure. There's also occasional combat which was criticised for being clunky, infrequent though it may be. Oh, that and the fact that you don't actually get to ride a dragon in it. ■

FACT

Some of the characters in the game refer to 'years' and 'weeks' when in the *Pern* canon they should be called 'turns' and 'sevendays', something which no doubt infuriated *Pern*-heads (a name I just made up).

DUCATI WORLD RACING CHALLENGE

Year	2001
Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Attention to Detail

THERE AREN'T MANY games that can claim the dubious honour of being called 'the banana in the tailpipe of Dreamcast racing', but that's exactly the moniker bestowed upon Ducati World Racing Challenge by IGN when it was originally released. As the name suggests, it's a racing game which focuses exclusively on Ducati motorbikes, with a selection of over 40 bikes to choose from (once they've been unlocked). These range all the way back through Ducati's history, taking in bikes from the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s as well as more modern Monster, Sport Touring, SuperSport and Superbike models (and there's also the ability to unlock the rare 'Foggy 996', dedicated to Carl Fogarty).

The bikes are acquired through different means depending on which of the game's two main modes you choose to take on. The first of these is Ducati Quick Race, which initially gives you just three tracks and a handful of bikes to choose from. As you continue to win races you'll unlock new tracks and bikes until you've got a full repertoire to choose from. It's straightforward stuff, but those just looking for standard racing will feel at home.

Anyone seeking something a little meatier can instead take part in the Ducati Life mode, which attempts to recreate something similar to Gran Turismo's main mode (with the operative word there being 'attempts'). Players start with $10,000, which is just about enough to buy them an entry level bike. By taking part in races they can, of course, earn money to buy new bikes, but there's a little more to it than that. There are also various licence tests that can be taken to prove your credentials, and the better your licence the more lucrative races are opened up to you.

On top of that, buying a bike isn't just picking from a standard list: this game encourages you to shop around with a selection of different ways to buy. If you just want a pristine, factory-quality bike you can buy direct from the showroom, but if you want to save some cash you may want to check the various used bike traders – dealerships, classified ads and people selling through the official Ducati magazine – to find the same bikes in a cheaper form with slight performance differences. And if taking part in standard races isn't exciting enough for you, you can also take on challenge matches where you take on a single opponent with large helpings of money or even your bike as a wager.

FACT

This may be the only Dreamcast game to have a PlayStation logo on the cover. The bike on the cover photo has a PlayStation sponsor on its livery.

This all combines for a mode with more depth to it than your typical arcade racing game of the era, but what turned critics off the game was the way things go slightly downhill once the actual racing starts. Handling was criticised for being temperamental, the AI is about as skilled at racing a bike as a bag of spiders, and the graphics were so underwhelming (with basic textures and a low frame rate) that it felt like the PlayStation version of the game had been ported over without any real optimisation for the more powerful Dreamcast hardware. ■

DYNAMITE COP

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

SEGA'S 1996 ARCADE beat 'em up Die Hard Arcade (which would get a Saturn port) only received its official movie licence late in development, by which point it was too late to be implemented in its Japanese release. In Japan, then, the game was known as Dynamite Deka, with players taking control of a cop called Bruno Delinger instead of Bruce Willis' John McClane character. The Die Hard licence wasn't renewed for the sequel, so while in Japan it was called Dynamite Deka 2, in the west it was given the moniker Dynamite Cop, with Bruno making his overseas debut.

The game mainly takes place on a cruise ship, where the president's daughter has been kidnapped by a group of pirates led by the evil Wolf Hongo. It's up to Bruno and his partners Jean Ivy and Eddie Brown to infiltrate the ship, take down Hongo's goons, give the main man himself a boot in the plums and rescue the president's daughter unharmed. And not to spoil anything, but if it can end with a massive explosion for good measure then so be it. There are three main paths to take through the game, determined by whether you choose to approach the ship by parachute, by boat or underwater. Each results in a different playthrough that lasts around 25 minutes (the game was originally released in arcades), taking in a selection of different rooms.

What makes Dynamite Cop so memorable is its refusal to take things seriously. While standard

fisticuffs are usually the order of the day, each of the game's areas has a healthy number of interactable objects which can be used to attack enemies. When you're fighting in a kitchen there's nothing wrong with picking up baguettes, enormous frozen tuna fish or even entire fridges and launching them at your foes, while other weapons found throughout the ship include arcade machines, urinals, vacuum cleaners and even giant mannequins with Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley's faces on them. Then there are the firearms, ranging from handguns and machine guns to laser rifles and actual nuclear missiles which create enormous explosions (and even then don't kill bosses right away), not to mention the not-so-small matter of the giant octopus boss fight midway through your adventure.

Dynamite Cop may not be one of the longest Dreamcast games, but it's certainly one of the most entertaining due to its charmingly silly sense of humour. It's also one of a few western Dreamcast games that had its own free DLC: by connecting to the Dreamcast Network players could download the Detonator Pack, which included extra illustrations for the game's museum mode, a new stun gun weapon and a new playable character, Cindy from Die Hard Arcade. And just for the hell of it, the game also includes an unlockable recreation of Sega's vintage 1980 arcade game Tranquilizer Gun, where players explore a basic maze in search of animals that have to be shot, sedated and dragged back to their safari truck. ■

FACT

Bruno Delinger is one of the playable units in Project X Zone, the huge crossover 3DS tactical RPG containing characters from Sega, Capcom and Bandai Namco games.

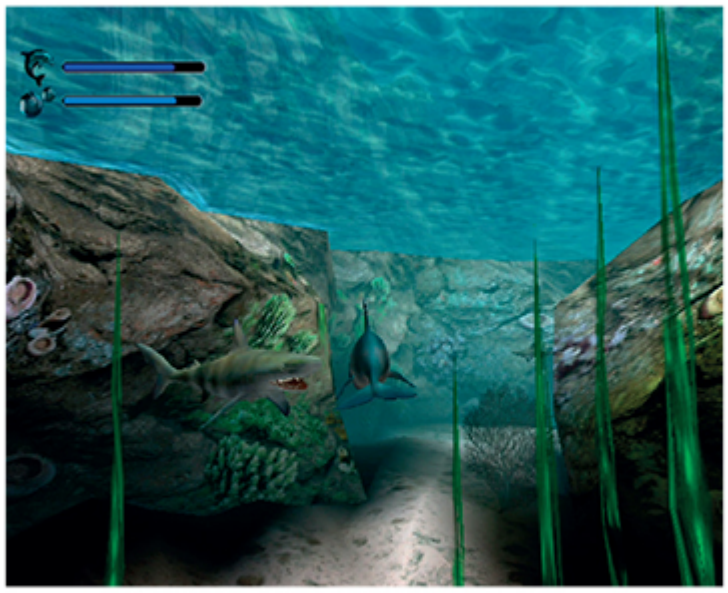
ECCO THE DOLPHIN: DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Appaloosa Interactive

WHEN IT COMES to the most impressive-looking Mega Drive / Genesis games, many players would likely include Ecco the Dolphin (and its two sequels) in their list. Although the bottlenose-based beauty wouldn't make an appearance on the Saturn, by the time the Dreamcast rolled around Sega decided it was time to see if Ecco could be just as visually stunning on 128-bit hardware as it was in the 16-bit era. If reception at the time was anything to go by, the answer to that was a fairly definitive 'yes'.

Rather than a straight sequel to the previous Ecco games, Defender of the Future is something of a reboot with an original story written by sci-fi author David Brin. It tells the story of an Earth under threat by an alien species called the Foe, which as the game begins has been trying and failing to launch an offensive on Earth because of the Guardian, a giant sentient crystal-like being that casts a force field around the entire planet. Shortly after the game begins the Foe finally finds a weak spot, wrecking the Guardian. It's up to Ecco to initially head to the dolphin city of Atlantis to fix the Guardian, then try to fend off the inevitable Foe invasion that's arrived during this time.

Despite the move from 2D to 3D, Ecco's basic moves (at least at first) are similar to those in the



16-bit games. He can swim around in any direction, use his sonar to communicate with other creatures and perform a charge attack which lets him both attack enemies and pick out small fish from schools to replenish his health. The main new gameplay mechanic, however, is the addition of 'songs' and 'gifts', which Ecco earns as he encounters new friends on his adventure. The five songs can be performed using the sonar and cause various things to happen: perform the 'Song of the Shark', for example, and sharks will get confused (leaving them wide open to attack), while performing the 'Song of the Fish' makes small schools of fish follow Ecco around, essentially giving him a backup health supply to munch on as he sees fit. The five gifts, meanwhile, are temporary power-ups which can help Ecco get out of various scraps. The Power of Stealth, for example, makes him invisible for a short period, while the Power of Sonar improves Ecco's sonar to the extent that it can damage enemies and break some stones.

FACT

The game's story is narrated by Tom Baker, better known as the Fourth Doctor in *Doctor Who*.

While Defender of the Future may not have pushed the boat out in the sense that it essentially takes what had been done before and added a third dimension to it, the game is still heralded as one of the most visually striking titles on the Dreamcast, with detailed animal models and impressive lighting effects making for a notable technical accomplishment on the console. Ultimately, it would be the last Ecco game ever released (at the time of writing), with a PS2 port following in 2002 after the Dreamcast's demise. ■

ECW HARDCORE REVOLUTION

Year	2000
Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Acclaim Studios Salt Lake City

ACCLAIM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH (what was then) the WWF dated back to 1989, with its release of WWF WrestleMania on the NES. In the decade that followed, Acclaim and the WWF were a dream team, knocking out numerous 8-bit, 16-bit and 32-bit wrestling games that were almost always lucrative for both parties, even if the quality didn't quite match up to the quantities sold. After the release of WWF Attitude, however, the WWF did a face/heel turn (depending on your stance) and jumped ship to THQ, which was earning plaudits for its WCW games on the Nintendo 64. Stuck with a wrestling game engine but no wrestling federation to attach to it, Acclaim reached out to ECW, the rebellious underdog Philadelphia promotion credited with trailblazing the edgier 'hardcore wrestling' content that the WWF and WCW would later embrace.

The result was ECW Hardcore Revolution, a wrestling game that – being completely frank about it – was little more than a reskinned WWF Attitude with new wrestlers, a new arena and a new commentator. As such, the gameplay is practically identical to that of WWF Attitude, for better or worse: moves are performed by entering button combinations, as if you were activating special moves in Mortal Kombat. If you wanted to perform a spinning neckbreaker with Tommy Dreamer, for example, you had to quickly press Down, Up, Y, while a vertical suplex was instead Right, Right B. You could always pause mid-game for a refresher of your move list but it's safe to say memorising what was essentially a bunch of cheat codes was hardly intuitive (and proved quite annoying during multiplayer matches if one or both players didn't know any moves).

FACT

A pre-alpha prototype of the game was discovered in 2022: its intro was that of WWF Attitude, eliminating any doubt that it was built on the same game.

The game's 42-wrestler roster consists of a mixture of talent that was working at ECW at the time of the game's release, talent that had recently left for other companies (but had already been paid for their likeness in the game) and quirky extra characters, such as managers and ECW commentator Joey Styles. Notable names include the likes of Taz, Sabu, Rob Van Dam, Rhino, Raven, New Jack, Mike Awesome, Justin Credible, Lance Storm and Yoshiiro Tajiri. There were also a number of 'jobbers' included, who were based on Acclaim developers and ECW backstage staff: these are the 'enhancement talent' you face early on in the game's career mode to make your journey a bit more realistic (rather than defeating established ECW stars right from your debut).

The other main difference Hardcore Revolution offered compared to WWF Attitude was the addition of the barbed wire match. This replaces the ring ropes with barbed wire, which on paper sounds brutal (and certainly leads to more blood being visible on the wrestlers) but in practice was less fun than a normal match because you couldn't whip your opponent off the ropes. Ultimately, Hardcore Revolution was met with a fairly negative reception from critics and fans alike, who weren't impressed with what they saw to be a repackaged WWF Attitude with a smaller roster consisting of far fewer household names. ■

ECW ANARCHY RULZ

Year	2000
Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Acclaim Studios Salt Lake City

IN AN INTERVIEW with YouTube channel Hard4Games in 2022, ECW wrestler Tommy Dreamer – who helped organise the video game deal with Acclaim in the first place and worked on its development behind the scenes – explained that the 'caveat' with the Acclaim agreement was that the publisher had to get a game out fairly quickly, which is why ECW Hardcore Revolution was little more than a reskinned WWF Attitude. 'The second game was going to be the big one,' Dreamer recalled, but by the time the sequel – ECW Anarchy Rulz – started development ECW was already in decline and facing potential closure. Realising that a lengthy development time could mean the company would go under before the second game was ready, Acclaim released Anarchy Rulz a mere six months after the first game, with the result being inevitable: another game using the WWF Attitude framework, and an even harsher critical reception.

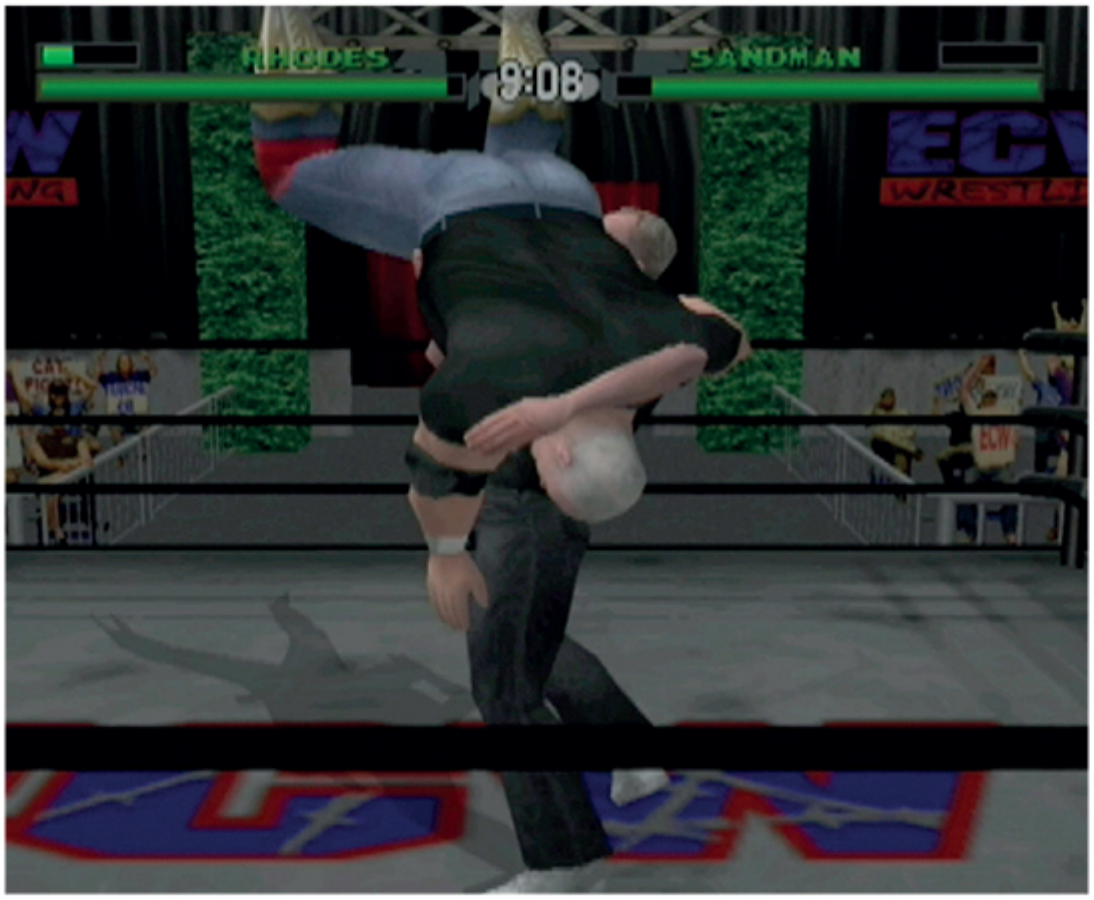
The previous game's 42-strong roster was increased, but only to 44, with 11 wrestlers dropping out and 13 others coming in. Most of the departures were wrestlers who had either moved on to other companies or retired, including the likes of Taz, Raven, Mike Awesome and The Sheik. Replacing them were some new fan favourites such as The Sandman, Mikey Whipwreck and Kid Kash, while owner Paul Heyman and legendary wrestler Dusty Rhodes also joined the roster. As in

Hardcore Revolution, each grappler has their own mean-sounding one-liners which they'll utter before a bout starts, lending a degree of personality to what are otherwise fairly expressionless character models.

In the ring itself, the gameplay is extremely similar to that of Hardcore Revolution (and WWF Attitude before it). Once again players are expected to be able to memorise button combinations for each move, meaning the one factor that drew the most criticism in Acclaim's previous games is still very much present and accounted for. One area in which it does differ somewhat, however, is the number of match types. A number of new variations have been added to mix things up, including Dumpster Matches (where a dumpster sits outside the ring and you have to throw your opponent into it), Table Matches (where throwing your opponent into a table does major damage), Rage in a Cage (which removes the ring entirely and replaces it with an enormous UFC-style octagon) and Brimstone Matches (where the ring is surrounded by hot coals and you have to throw your opponent onto them to win). The game also brings backstage wrestling to Acclaim's engine for the first time with the Backlot Brawl mode, where wrestlers fight in the truck bay outside the arena.

FACT

The first ECW game was actually going to be developed by Rockstar Games, but while it was waiting first to see if GTA III would take off, Acclaim stepped in with its own offer.

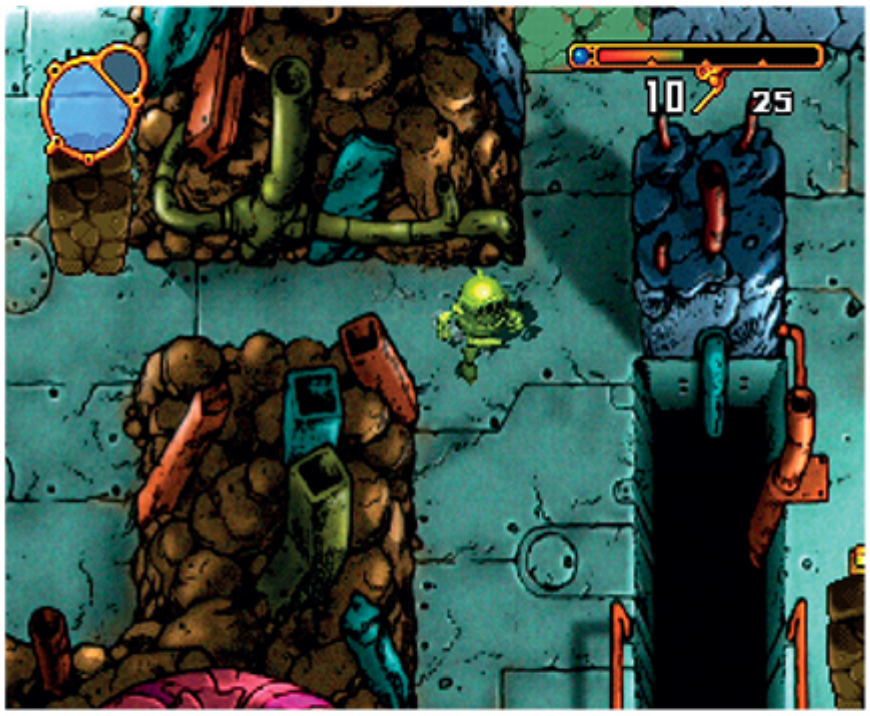


None of this was enough to quell the general negativity surrounding the game, however, and it was to be the last ECW title anyway as the company would go under in early 2001. Acclaim would eventually get the time it needed to make its entirely new wrestling engine, creating its Legends of Wrestling series which lasted three entries before Acclaim, too, entered bankruptcy. Anarchy does indeed Rul. ■

ELEMENTAL GIMMICK GEAR

Year 1999
Publisher Vatical Entertainment
Developer Birthday

THE DREAMCAST'S WESTERN game library isn't exactly crammed with RPGs, which is why it's all the more surprising that Elemental Gimmick Gear (or E.G.G. for short) wasn't more popular when it was released despite widespread critical acclaim. The game focuses primarily on a chap whose default name is Leon (but you can change it to whatever you want), who had been asleep for more than 5,100 years but suddenly wakes with amnesia just as a robotic gang called the Pirates resurrect a being called Psycho Mother, who creates a bunch of tentacles which spread throughout the land, destroying everything in their path. Still with me? It's up to Leon and his special egg-shaped robot called… well, E.G.G. to head out, stop Psycho Mother and find out what happened to him all those thousands of years ago. E.G.G. is more of an action RPG, so while at first glance it has the appearance of your typical turn-based Square Enix affair, when you engage in a battle the action switches to a 3D polygonal fight where you can freely run around and attack enemies. The E.G.G. isn't just there to provide Leon with extra protection: it can also be used for a variety of other purposes, from pushing, carrying and destroying heavy blocks, to extending an arm like a grappling hook, to rolling into a ball (or an egg, if you will) and spin-dashing Sonic-style through enemies. ■



FACT

Like a number of other Dreamcast games, putting the E.G.G. disc into a PC's CD-ROM drive lets you see a bunch of bonus rendered artwork which can be saved to your PC.

ESPN INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD

Year 2000
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

RELEASED DURING THE 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney (which I'm sure was just one big massive coincidence), ESPN International Track & Field is the sixth game in Konami's Track & Field / Hyper Sports series of… let's say summer-based multi-discipline sports games, to keep it legally safe. Initially there are eight events to choose from: 100m Dash, Long Jump, Horizontal Bar, Pole Vault, Hammer Throw, 110m Hurdles, Javelin Throw and Weight Lifting – but a further four can be unlocked. By playing through the game's Championship mode you can eventually gain access to the High Jump, Triple Jump, Vault and Trap Shooting events, bringing the total to 12. As is always the case in the Track & Field games, most of the events involve building up power or speed by bashing buttons: in this case, players have to alternately hit X and B as quickly as possible. This makes the game a little trickier than most other entries in the series, because the Dreamcast's button layout means X and B and fairly far apart: this means players have to spread their fingers wider to hit them both, and cramp can set in quicker. Their distance also makes it harder for sneakier players to try techniques possible in other home versions of the game, from simply rubbing a single finger back and forth to introducing props like a metal ruler or a seesaw built with a pencil. That isn't a joke: these are just some of a wide selection of techniques shared by the Track & Field community. ■

FACT

Despite my jokes about its non-official status, the Japanese version is actually an officially licensed Olympics game, going by the name Ganbare! Nippon! Olympics 2000.

ESPN NBA 2NIGHT

Year 2000
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

AMERICAN SPORTS CHANNEL ESPN first started lending its name to video games in 1993 with the release of a number of 16-bit sports titles published by Sony Imagesoft, but in 1999 Konami announced that it had teamed up with the broadcaster to produce a new wave of ESPN-branded video games. ESPN NBA 2Night was obviously one of these, and was the only one to be released on the Dreamcast. Based on the long-running ESPN show NBA Tonight (which was enjoying a suitably 'funky' name change at the time), the game is your typical basketball fare, with options to play a single preseason game, make your way through a season (either 14, 28, 56 or a full 82 games), skip straight to the Playoffs or take part in an All-Star game made up of the best players from the Eastern and Western Conferences. All 29 NBA teams and their full player rosters are included, and music from rap group The Pharcyde helped ensure the menus sounded suitably hip (and, indeed, hop). While the actual gameplay divided opinion – mainly because it was competing with the previously released NBA 2K, which many considered better – the sound was more universally disliked, mainly because co-commentator Stuart Scott has a tiny selection of soundbites which repeat constantly after every basket. And once you've heard him sing R Kelly's 'Bump n' Grind' (seriously) for the seventh time in a game, you'll absolutely be making use of the mercifully included option to turn off the announce team. ■

FACT

When Konami and ESPN announced their partnership, it was claimed that MLB and MLS games were also coming to the Dreamcast. This ultimately didn't come to pass.

EUROPEAN SUPER LEAGUE

Year 2001
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Crimson Studio

IF YOU'RE A football fan you may remember the furore that kicked off in 2021 when a group of English, Italian and Spanish teams announced plans to form a breakaway European Super League tournament: plans that lasted just a few days before enormous backlash effectively put a stop to them. What a lot of people didn't realise, however, was that the idea had already been done two decades earlier, when Virgin Interactive released a football game with exactly the same name and concept. As in the real-life proposal, the video game version of the European Super League – which was developed by Crimson Studio, the same team that had previously worked on Virgin's PS1 title Viva Football – consisted of a number of teams from all over Europe taking part in a contest (players can choose either a league, a knockout cup or a World Cup style setup with groups followed by knockout rounds). The 16 clubs included were Liverpool, Chelsea, AC Milan, Inter, Juventus, Bayer Leverkusen, Borussia Dortmund, Bayern Munich, Marseille, PSG, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Ajax, IFK Göteborg, Olympiacos and Benfica. Each team is officially licensed with their full kits and squads. All well and good, but it does naturally lead to one major issue: the specific focus on 16 clubs meant European Super League had fewer teams than practically any other football game of its era, meaning if you were a supporter of any other club outside of the 16, you were out of luck because they weren't in here. ■

FACT

The back of the box says: 'The European Super League may not exist yet, but it probably will soon.' Well, your prediction nearly came true, lads.

EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING

Year	2000
Publisher	THQ
Developer	Heavy Iron Studios

DESPITE BEING ONE of the most popular horror film franchises of all time, *The Evil Dead* hadn't seen many video game adaptations in the twentieth century (the only exception being a hidden gem of a ZX Spectrum and C64 tie-in released in 1984). This wrong was righted in the twenty-first century when THQ got hold of the licence and bashed out a trilogy of *Evil Dead* games, the first of which received a Dreamcast version. And given that the first two movies revolve around a poor chap being tormented by demons in the woods, it made sense that Hail to the King would inevitably be a survival horror title in the style of Resident Evil.

Presented as a sequel to the third movie Army of Darkness, Hail to the King sees our hero Ash returning to his supermarket job and getting together with a new girlfriend called Jenny in an attempt to live some sort of normalcy again. Before long though, Ash starts having nightmares about the Necronomicon, the 'Book of the Dead' that started his war with the evil Deadites in the first place. Realising that her beau is struggling to cope with his past, Jenny suggests the pair take a road trip to the cabin in the woods where the first two *Evil Dead* movies took place, in an attempt to help him face his demons and move on with his life. Unfortunately, it turns out 'facing his demons' ends up becoming a bit more literal than expected, when Ash's possessed severed hand from Evil Dead II returns and plays the tape recorder that summoned the Deadites in the first place. The evil awakens and kidnaps Jenny, so it's up to poor Ash – for the fourth time – to put an end to these shenanigans and put the evil to rest once again.

FACT

Some versions of Army of Darkness have a different ending where Ash falls asleep and wakes up in a post-apocalyptic future, instead of present-day Michigan. Safe to say the game doesn't follow on from that one.

Ash is always armed with two weapons: quite literally, in fact, given that his right arm has a chainsaw permanently attached to it throughout the entire game. His left hand can hold one of four other weapons, starting off with a pistol but eventually expanding to include an axe, a rifle or Ash's trusty 'boomstick', his shotgun. Players can choose which of the two weapons to use when confronting enemies, and when an enemy is wounded and in a stunned state they can perform a typically Ash-like finishing move in which he guts them with his chainsaw, kills them with his other weapon then delivers a witty one-liner. And speaking of his trademark banter, Ash is voiced by Bruce Campbell, who played him in the movies, ensuring a wholly accurate adventure. The game even dedicates the Y button to one-liners, allowing players to say one any time they feel like it. THQ would go on to release two more Evil Dead games, but while A Fistful of Boomstick and Regeneration were arguably more entertaining, their hack and slash gameplay meant they had a very different feel to this, the only survival horror take on the series. ■

EVIL TWIN: CYPRIEN'S CHRONICLES

Year	2002
Publisher	BigBen Interactive
Developer	In Utero

EASILY ONE OF the more interesting European exclusives on the Dreamcast, Evil Twin feels like the sort of game that would have a much larger cult following had it been released in North America, especially given that it's actually a Ubisoft game. Ubi had published the game on PS2 in late 2001, then BigBen stepped in to handle the Dreamcast version, which was released in fairly limited numbers given that the console was flatlining by 2002.

The game stars Cyprien, a moody 10-year-old orphan who resembles Chucky from the *Child's Play* movies (and also has a deep voice that doesn't suit him in the slightest). When his friends at the orphanage throw him a birthday party, Cyprien doesn't feel like joining in the festivities. One of his buddies realises why: Cyprien's parents were both killed on his birthday a few years earlier, so it's not exactly the happiest day of the year for him. A despondent Cyprien heads back to his room, where his teddy bear and imaginary friend Lenny try to console him. Cyprien isn't having any of it, though, and during a hefty rant in which he practically goes into a trance, tells Lenny he's not real and that he condemns his imaginary world to oblivion. Turns out this isn't the best idea, because suddenly giant tentacles appear in the orphanage, grabbing the kids at the party. When Cyprien snaps out of his trance and realises Lenny is gone, he's teleported to said imaginary world, Undabed, where he learns

that he has to rescue Lenny while dealing with evil versions of his friends and preparing to face off against The Master, the mysterious overseer who's taken over.

In case it wasn't clear, Evil Twin is a platformer aimed at a more mature audience, and this is highlighted further in the game's dark, stylised environments. The world of Undabed takes inspiration from the likes of Tim Burton's movies, *The City of Lost Children* and German expressionism to create a region split into eight separate islands, each pulling from various aspects of Cyprien's imagination. And since it's a world where said imagination is the central focus, Cyprien is able to transform into his own make-believe alter-ego, SuperCyp, who comes with his own set of special abilities such as flying over large distances or running at high speeds.

FACT

Evil Twin was originally meant to be a series of animated made-for-TV movies that explored childhood fears, until a TV producer convinced its creators to look into making it a game instead.

Evil Twin: Cyprien's Chronicles was met with a middling reception by the European games media, with the general consensus being that the wonderfully dark art design had been somewhat compromised by platforming gameplay that could occasionally be frustrating due to control and camera issues. If you're the sort of player who has a high level of tolerance for such annoyances and is happy to accept them as remnants of an era when such problems were frequently encountered in 3D platformers, then Evil Twin's design may turn out to be something of a hidden gem for you (its awful voice acting aside). ■

EVOLUTION: THE WORLD OF SACRED DEVICE

Year 1999
Publisher Ubisoft / ESP
Developer Sting

THIS CURIOUS RPG tells the story of Mag Launcher, a 16-year-old lad who, like all members of the Launcher family before him, is destined to spend his life as an adventurer. One day Mag's parents disappeared while on an adventure of their own, leaving Mag at home. A month later a mysterious, mute girl called Linear Cannon arrived at the house with a note from Mag's dad which simply said: 'You must protect this girl, Linear, until I return.' The game opens after these events, with Mag bringing Linear with him on his regular cave-exploring jaunts, but before long things kick off and the pair – along with the family butler Gre Nade (ugh) – find themselves on an epic journey. Evolution is something of a hybrid RPG in that its exploration takes the form of a dungeon crawler, complete with grid-based dungeons consisting of numerous floors. When you engage in battle, however, the action switches to a turn-based RPG more in line with the likes of a Final Fantasy game. Your party can have up to three members, and you can choose to stand each character at the front of battle (where they'll attack quicker and give and receive more damage), at the back (where the opposite happens) or in the middle. While Evolution provides an interesting story and interesting character designs, it's also notorious for being exceptionally poorly translated, with a lot of awkward wording, grammatical errors and outright incomprehensible sentences. Thankfully, you can still make out what's going on. ■

FACT

According to a Q&A in the manual, the game's writer Atushiko Matsumura named all the main characters after weapons because he's a massive fan of the military.

EVOLUTION 2: FAR OFF PROMISE

Year 1999
Publisher Ubisoft / ESP
Developer Sting

IT'S DIFFICULT TO explain the plot to Evolution 2 without revealing what happens in the first game, so let's just say that revelations were discovered, bad guys were dealt with and the previously silent Linear finally became able to hold a basic conversation. All's well that ends well then? For a while. Six months or so later, the Society office in Mag's home town (where he receives his missions) gets a letter from the Society museum in Museville, located in the deep south of the continent, requesting the presence of their best adventurer. With no idea what lies in store for them, Mag and his pals get on a transcontinental train and head to Museville to see what's going on. Ultimately, the majority of the game plays much like its predecessor, with the new Museville hub more or less performing the same duties as the one in the previous game, handing out missions to Mag and co. That's not to say Evolution 2 is a carbon copy of the first game, mind you: whereas all the dungeons in the original Evolution were randomly generated, this time some of them are preset. The presentation is also a little better this time: gone is the awfully translated text-only dialogue, replaced by proper (Japanese-only) voice acting with subtitles that are far more carefully localised and easier to understand. Both Evolution and its sequel are something of an acquired taste, but the second game is certainly the more polished of the two. ■

FACT

In 2002, Evolution Worlds was released on the GameCube. This consisted of a heavily shortened version of the first Evolution plus the full Evolution 2 on one disc.

EXHIBITION OF SPEED

Year	2001
Publisher	Titus Software
Developer	Player 1

AS YOU'LL SEE later in this book, publisher Titus and developer Player 1 had previously released Roadsters on the Dreamcast to a fairly negative reception. Undaunted, the partnership decided to press on and release a sequel, which was initially announced as Roadsters 2: Exhibition of Speed. Perhaps realising that attaching the name of a critically-panned game may not be the best way to go about it, Titus then ditched the Roadsters moniker and simply went with Exhibition of Speed instead. The game lets you choose from a selection of characters, from posh butler Harold and stetson-wearing cowboy Jimbo to the laughably stereotypical Frenchman Pierre, who wears a beret, has a pencil-thin moustache and sports a red and white striped shirt (presumably his baguette is in the trunk). The main mode is Trophy, where you start with a modest amount of cash – just enough to buy an entry-level car – then work your way through a series of races until you can afford to either upgrade your existing vehicle or splash out on something more powerful. That said, the other mode, Quick Race, gives you the full range of tracks and cars to choose from, which does defeat the purpose of Trophy mode somewhat. Ultimately, the scrapping of the Roadsters name wasn't enough to convince the press that Titus had improved on its previous efforts with Exhibition of Speed, with the UK's *Official Dreamcast Magazine* awarding the game a rather damning score of 2 out of 10. ■

FACT

The game's 20 cars all have fictional names but are clearly based on real-life vehicles. The Vertige Stinger is a Dodge Viper, for example, while the Panther V12 is a Jaguar E-Type.

EXPENDABLE

Year	1999
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Rage Software

KNOWN AS MILLENNIUM Soldier: Expendable in Europe, this top-down action game is a shining example of why the Dreamcast really should have taken notes from the PlayStation's DualShock controller and added a second analogue stick. The game is an arcade-style twin-stick shooter, but without the twin-stick element players instead have to hold a shoulder button to lock their character's aim in place, enabling them to run in one direction while firing in another. Set in the year 2463, Expendable tells how the human race has been spending its time making nearby planets habitable. Turns out this was a bad move, because an alien race called the Charva decides to use these newly breathable planets to hopscotch their way to Earth, invading everything along the way. You play as the Expendables (not to be confused with the ensemble action movie), a group of emotionless soldiers grown in labs with the sole purpose of killing until they're killed. Rather than having a number of lives, then, you instead have a number of Expendables: when one grunt dies, another identical one replaces them, fighting fresh and willing to continue the game's mantra of pumping countless bullets into anything that moves and most things that don't. In case it wasn't clear that the action here is a little on the mindless side, its box reminds you this is the case with its rather frank advice: 'Don't stop running, don't stop shooting, don't start thinking, because you are expendable.' ■

FACT

An Android port called Expendable: Rearmed was released in 2012, but is no longer available.

F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX FOR DREAMCAST

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Video System

YOU MAY THINK it's a little odd to have that 'for Dreamcast' in the title, but it turns out it's right to be there. F1 World Grand Prix was originally released on the N64 in 1998 and was widely considered to be one of the best representations of the sport ever made, but that version was developed by Paradigm Entertainment. This Dreamcast title, which was instead handled by Video System, is essentially the same game in name only: put the two side-by-side and it's clear that they're completely different. Where they don't differ is in official licensing: much like its 64-bit sibling, the Dreamcast version features all the circuits and (almost) all the drivers from the real-life F1 season (though because it was released a year later, the Dreamcast version covers the 1998 season instead of the N64's 1997 season). And just like the N64 version, the game gives you the option to not only take part in the full season, but also turn on the actual events that took place during it, meaning all your opponents record the same qualifying session times, pit on the same laps and suffer engine blow-outs at the same time. One thing it doesn't include, however, is the N64 version's brilliant Challenge mode, which lets you take on specific moments from throughout the season and see if you can replicate them as they happened in real life. While the Dreamcast game may be visually more impressive, then, it's the N64 version's gameplay that people speak fondly of. ■

FACT

The only real driver not featured in the game is Jacques Villeneuve, for licensing reasons. Instead, he's replaced with the generic-sounding Williams Driver.

F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX II FOR DREAMCAST

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Video System

F1 WORLD GRAND Prix II has many of the same quirks as its predecessor: it too was handled by a different developer to the N64 version, is a completely different game as a result, and was released a full year later (and therefore covers a different season). This time it's the 1999 F1 season getting the Video System treatment, and while the game is more of the same it does offer two interesting new modes. Gallery lets you view polygonal versions of the racers and their cars along with detailed profiles (with Villeneuve too this time), while Broadcast mode lets you watch Dreamcast-generated recreations of all the actual races that took place during the 1999 season, meaning you can watch the four crashes at Canada's turn 13 in polygonal form. ■

FACT

The VMU shows a tiny map of the circuit while you race, which is a bit pointless given that it's on the main screen anyway.

F1 RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

Year 2001
Publisher Video System
Developer Ubisoft

IT'S NOT REALLY clear why Video System, which had been developing F1 World Grand Prix II, published this 'rival' game in Europe just one month later. Developed by Ubisoft, F1 Racing Championship is more of the same sort of thing in that it's based on the 1999 F1 season and features all the officially licensed cars and drivers (including Villeneuve). The main difference between this and the F1WGP titles is that there's an Arcade mode included, which turns off all the rules and regulations and just lets you fling your massively expensive car around the tracks with no concern for damage or death. Oh, and if you're into your alt-rock then the intro features 'Girl Don't Come', a relatively unknown B-side by Garbage. ■

FACT

Jacques Villeneuve finished 5th in the 1998 season, but in 1999 his new car was so unreliable he was only able to finish four out of the 16 races, failing to place any higher than 8th.

F355 CHALLENGE: PASSIONE ROSSA

Year	2000
Publisher	Acclaim / Sega
Developer	CRI

THE FERRARI CHALLENGE is an annual series of single-model races that lets Ferrari owners come together and race their beloved automobiles. The series started in 1993 with the Ferrari 348 Challenge, which continued for a couple of years until the F355 took over between 1995–2000. It was during this period that Sega teamed up with Ferrari to make a video game version of the competition: this came to arcades in 1999 and was then ported to the Dreamcast the following year. As the name suggests, F355 Challenge only lets you drive a single car, so in terms of variety it's clearly lacking.

It was, however, considered an impressively detailed recreation of the F355 (for its time, at least), and comes with a wide variety of customisation options allowing players to not only tune the car to their exact likings – the likes of ride height, spring rate, camber and stabiliser diameter can be tweaked – but also toggle on and of specific assists designed to make this absolute beast of a car more easy to manage. Perhaps the most contentious of these is the IBS (that's Intelligent Brake System, not irritable bowel syndrome), which is initially turned on by default and automatically applies the brakes – if you've played any kind of racing game before you'll want to turn this of before you do anything.

FACT

Sega of America boss Bernie Stolar once made a deal with Acclaim to port Virtua Fighter 3 and Crazy Taxi to N64. When Sega of Japan found out they shut it down pronto: it's said Stolar let Acclaim publish F355 as compensation.

What it may lack in playable cars, F355 Challenge certainly makes up for with its track selection. There are six circuits to choose from at first – Motegi, Suzuka (in long and short versions), Monza, Sugo and Long Beach – and by playing through the game you can unlock a further five that are exclusive to the home version: Atlanta, Laguna Seca, Sepang, the infamous Nürburgring and Ferrari's own Fiorano test track. All 11 tracks are meticulously detailed for their era, and the combination of the detailed visuals and realistic handling means it's fair to say F355 was one of the most impressive racing games at the time, if also one of the most difficult. Special mention must also go to the soundtrack, which is a heavy rock affair consisting of songs performed by Minoru Niihara and Genki Hitomi, each of whom were lead singers for Japanese heavy metal bands (Loudness and Vow Wow, respectively). It's a genuinely brilliant listen.

What the Dreamcast version doesn't offer – which is understandable, given the power it would have required – is the three-screen display featured in the 'deluxe' arcade version. This was a special cabinet that not only showed the in-car view as normal, but also included two more TVs sat at the sides, 'wrapping' the screen round the player's head so they could look left and right and see what was visible through the side windows. Naturally, this meant processing an environment three times the size, which was likely just a stretch too much for the Dreamcast (the technical complications of connecting it to three TVs aside). ■

FATAL FURY: MARK OF THE WOLVES

Year	2001
Publisher	Agetec
Developer	SNK

BEST KNOWN BY its original Neo Geo name of Garou: Mark of the Wolves, this is the ninth game in SNK's iconic Fatal Fury series of fighting games. It's set a decade after the death of notorious crime boss Geese Howard, and in the time that's passed the city of Southtown has become a generally better place to live. This may be where you expect me to say that things suddenly go bad again but nope, all is well: a new fighting tournament has been set up and it all seems to be relatively good-natured, though it is hosted by the mysterious Kain, who has an air of dodginess to him.

While the vast majority of the games in the Fatal Fury series were unique for their 'two-lane' fighting system in which players could hop between the foreground and background while fighting, this concept has been scrapped for Mark of the Wolves, making it a more straightforward fighting game. Not that it suffers for it, mind you: the game was well-received at the time for its engaging combat and continues to enjoy a strong following to this day. There are 14 characters to choose from, and – in a somewhat bold move for the ninth entry in a series – almost all of them are completely new. In fact, the only returning character is Terry Bogard, the 'Ryu' of Fatal Fury, who appears with a new, older look. Everyone else, from young ninja Hokutomaru to sultry pirate lady B. Jenet and the unfortunately named karate expert Khushnood Butt, is making their debut appearance.

The fighting system is similar to that of games in the King of Fighters series, with four attack buttons (weak and strong punches and kicks) providing a reasonable variety of moves. The most unique aspect of the game, however, is the introduction of a new system called Tactical Offence Position (TOP), which kicks in when the player's life gauge reaches a certain level. You can choose to assign the TOP area to the start, middle or end of the life bar, and when your life gauge enters the area your character will automatically trigger TOP mode, which gives them a number of advantages. Not only do their attacks do more damage, they also slowly regain health and are able to perform special TOP attacks, which take a big chunk out of the opponent's guard meter if they're blocked. Another major element of Mark of the Wolves' fighting system is the 'Just Defence' technique. It works similar to parrying in the Street Fighter III games, and kicks in when the player blocks an attack at the very last second. If an attack is successfully Just Defended, the player will not only avoid taking damage, they'll actually recover a tiny amount of health and will also recover from the block quicker than usual. They can even perform Just Defences in the air, even though there's no air blocking in the game. ■

FACT

The music that plays in Rock Howard's stage features a rather shameless lift (or an homage, if you'd rather) of 'Children' by Robert Miles.

FIGHTING FORCE 2

Year	1999
Publisher	Eidos
Developer	Core Design

THE ORIGINAL FIGHTING Force, released on the PlayStation, N64 and PC in 1997, was a beat 'em up that was originally pitched to Sega as a fourth Streets of Rage game but was ultimately rejected, which led to Core deciding to press on anyway and release it as a completely original title. While it was met with somewhat mixed reviews, it clearly did well enough to justify a sequel, and so Fighting Force 2 came to the Dreamcast and PlayStation a couple of years later.

The follow-up stars Hawk Manson, one of the original game's protagonists, but its story is completely new. This time it's the future, and the Knackamiche Corporation – pronounced 'Nakamichi' despite its bizarre spelling – is getting involved in some questionable stuff. It's trying to create the world's first human clone as part of a plan to create 'genetic weaponry based on human DNA'. This would be dodgy in and of itself, but there's also the small matter of an international treaty which banned human cloning at the end of the twentieth century. It's up to Hawk, working for the State Intelligence Police (SI-COPS), to take on a classified mission to infiltrate the Knackamiche offices, erase sensitive data and take out any key personnel who get in his way.

The first Fighting Force was generally played with a zoomed out camera which gave the game a viewpoint similar to that of most other beat 'em up games that came before it. Fighting Force 2, however, opts for a different approach by placing the camera over Hawk's shoulder in a view similar to that of a third-person adventure game. The result is a game that looks more like an action version of Core's Tomb Raider (or Urban Chaos, found later in this book, if you prefer). Despite this change in perspective, the game still plays somewhat like the first Fighting Force, with Hawk able to not only attack his enemies, but also create makeshift weapons using a wide variety of objects located around each environment.

FACT

Although the game is simply set in 'the future', the first game took place in 2000 and Hawk is now five years older according to his profile in the manual, so all this bio-nonsense must be taking place in 2005.

Fighting Force 2 also boasts another major difference compared to its predecessor, although 'boasts' may not be the most suitable word to describe it. Whereas the first game allowed players to choose between four different characters, this time Hawk is the sole hero available, lessening the variety somewhat. The switch to a single protagonist and the third-person viewpoint also leads to the dropping of a co-op mode, something that was in the first game and which, by this point, was considered a staple of the beat 'em up genre. Fighting Force 2 was met with a less enthusiastic reception than its predecessor and the series met its natural end with its release. A third game was actually in development for the PS2 and Xbox, promising to go back to basics by reintroducing the option to choose between four playable characters, but ultimately the project was abandoned, meaning Hawk had to settle for early retirement. ■

FIGHTING VIPERS 2

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	CRI / Scarab

THE ORIGINAL FIGHTING Vipers, released in 1995, was an arcade title (later ported to the Saturn) which used the same engine as Virtua Fighter 2 but offered a number of notable differences, the most obvious being the introduction of caged arenas and fighter armour. While the game was never as successful as the Virtua Fighter series, it was still received well enough to encourage Sega to give fans a sequel, this time on the more advanced Sega Model 3 arcade system used for Virtua Fighter 3. Fighting Vipers 2 came to arcades in 1998, but the Dreamcast port (which wasn't released in North America) didn't arrive until three years later.

Fighting Vipers 2 is set two years after the events of the first game, where a group of Vipers – urban street fighters who battle each other wearing armour in back-alley rings – were invited to take part in an official tournament hosted by the mayor of Armstone City. It's since become clear that the mayor, who goes by the mysterious moniker B.M., is something of a dictator, and he's now passed a law making Vipers illegal in the city. As many Vipers are arrested and thrown in jail, a small group decide that they'll continue to fight, in direct opposition to the mayor's law. Guess who the final boss is, then.

Like its predecessor, Fighting Vipers 2 is most notable for its colourful cast of characters, who are a little more extreme than your typical fighting game. Candy (known as Honey in Japan) is a wannabe fashion designer whose armour is a rubber dress she designed herself, while Raxel is the frontman of his rock band Death Crunch and always fights with his guitar round his waist. The two new characters added to the sequel are similarly eccentric: Emi is a young computer nerd who fights with mech armour shaped like a teddy bear, while Charlie is a BMX rider whose entire bike is strapped to his back. Two new unlockable characters are also in there: a wrestler called Del Sol, and a featureless metallic chap called Kuhn who's basically a male version of Virtua Fighter's Dural (and even boasts some Virtua Fighter 3 moves).

FACT

According to director Hiroshi Kataoka, the development team travelled to San Francisco and took photos inside Alcatraz to get inspiration for some of the game's stages.

The first game's armour-breaking mechanic is carried over to the sequel, and gives players an armour gauge showing the condition of their upper and lower armour. If either takes enough damage it'll break off, exposing that area to more damage if they get hit. New to the second game is a Super KO move, which gives one final chance to a player who's lost all their armour. Once you're completely armourless, hitting all three buttons unleashes the Super KO, a slow but instant-winning move that blasts your opponent right out of the caged ring. Fighting Vipers 2 was a near-arcade port of an accomplished arcade fighting game, but given that the series was always in the shadow of Virtua Fighter (along with the decision not to release it in North America), it perhaps deserves to be discussed more than it is. ■

FLAG TO FLAG

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Zoom

DEVELOPED BY JAPANESE studio Zoom – which until this point had been best known for its Zero Divide mech fighting games – Flag to Flag is a racing game based on the official Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART) racing league, specifically the 1998 CART FedEx season. Given that it sports the official CART licence, that means everything in here is the real deal, from the 19 tracks that featured during the '98 season in the order they appeared on the calendar in real life, to the 18 teams that were involved, to 27 of the actual drivers who took part including the likes of Dario Franchitti, Al Unser Jr, Jimmy Vasser and Alex Zinardi (who ended up winning the championship that year).

FACT

The 1998 CART season saw tragedy in the 12th race in Michigan, when Adrián Fernández crashed into a wall. Although he was okay, one of his wheels flew into the crowd, killing three spectators.

The game features two main modes, Arcade and Championship. Arcade mode may as well be called Exhibition since it lets you choose any track and driver you want for a single one-off race. Championship, meanwhile, is the main event, allowing you to select a driver then take part in the entire 19-race 1998 CART season, with points accumulating after each event. Although the racing itself feels a little on the arcade side (and the rock music accompanying the action only strengthens this vibe), there's still a hefty range of car setting options, allowing you to tweak the car's tyre compound, aerodynamics, fuel, suspension, gear ratio and transmission until it drives exactly the way you want it to. And with a range of varied circuits covering both ovals and street courses, it's fair to say this is useful. ■

FLOIGAN BROS: EPISODE 1

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Visual Concepts

IT'S ALWAYS A bold move to declare your new game as the first part of a series, because it's tempting fate in a way: see The Lord of the Rings Vol 1 on SNES, which never got a Vol 2. Floigan Bros sadly falls into the same category, with the Episode 1 title denoting plans for subsequent entries that never saw the light of day. The game is a curious variation on the point-and-click adventure genre, and has players taking control of a chap called Hoigle (voiced by Jason Marsden, aka the voice of Goofy's son Max) who's trying to help his his taller, dumber brother Moigle (voiced by animation legend Frank Welker, who's played the likes of Megatron, Scooby-Doo and Garfield over the years).

FACT

The game was to get regular 'DLC', which would unlock content already on the disc. The console's death meant not all the DLC was released, making it 'lost' until 2017 when the game's developers helped to make a modded VMU save file that unlocked it all.

Moigle is trying to build a machine that will stop the evil Baron Malodorous from stealing their land, but he's not the brightest bulb at the light show and so, as Hoigle, you have to wander around retrieving the parts by solving various puzzles. A lot of these involve interacting with Moigle and manipulating his emotions: if he's scared he might not help in some situations until you reassure him, while sometimes you actively have to anger him so he'll pick you up and throw you to an otherwise inaccessible area. Floigan Bros was extremely short – it could be beaten in around an hour – and given that it was released right at the end of the Dreamcast's life with no sign of an Episode 2, Sega wisely sold it for $19.99. ■

FROGGER 2: SWAMPY'S REVENGE

Year 2000
Publisher Hasbro Interactive
Developer Blitz Games

IN 1997, HASBRO Interactive released a modernised version of Konami's 1981 arcade classic Frogger for the PlayStation and PC. Frogger 2, then, is a sequel of that remake. This time Frogger's joined by his girlfriend Lillie Frog, but the pair's romantic bliss is cut short when Swampy, a crocodile who's jealous of Frogger's fame and fortune, decides to kidnap Lillie's baby brothers and sisters. It's up to Frogger and Lillie to team up and rescue the froggy kids to stop Swampy's plan to become 'King of the Swamp' (though quite how kidnapping children is supposed to accomplish that isn't clear). Players alternate between controlling Frogger and Lillie in each stage, and our heroes move in the same way as the original Frogger with each directional press making them hop one 'square' forward on an invisible grid. There are new moves, however, such as a high jump which allows them to reach higher platforms, a double-jump which lets them hop over gaps, and a croak move which acts as a sort of sonar that lets you locate any remaining frog kids who still have to be rescued on a particular level. As well as the main single-player Story mode there are also three multiplayer modes: Capture the Frog (which is basically a competitive version of the arcade original where you have to rescue as many babies as you can), Race, and Snake (the latter being a competitive version of the popular mobile phone game of the same name). ■

FACT

This is technically the second Frogger 2. The arcade original got a sequel for Atari and Coleco home consoles, with the awkward title Frogger II: Threee-Deep!

FUR FIGHTERS

Year 2000
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Bizarre Creations

JUST A FEW months before Bizarre Creations transformed the world of racing games with Metropolis Street Racer players were treated to Fur Fighters, another Bizarre-developed game that couldn't be more different. The Fur Fighters are a group of six anthropomorphic animals locked in an ongoing feud with the evil General Viggo, who has plans of world domination. In an attempt to distract them from his scheming, Viggo has sent his army of bears out to kidnap the Fur Fighters' children, so the safari-friendly sextet head out to rescue their kids and put some bullets in Viggo's backside for good measure. When I say bullets I mean it: Fur Fighters is a third-person action game where ammunition is in plentiful supply and gunning down cute and cuddly animal enemies is the order of the day. Each of the six Fur Fighters has their own special abilities: their leader, a Scottish dog called Roofus, specialises in burrowing, for example, while Chang (a Hong Kong fox) can squeeze through holes and Juliette (a cat from France) can climb walls. Meanwhile, Argentinian penguin Rico can swim, Australian kangaroo Bungalow can jump higher, and Tweek – a baby dragon – can glide through the air. Although you choose one of them at first, each stage has a number of Telepoints which you can step through to transform into a different Fur Fighter and use their skill. The game also has a four-player mode called FluffMatch where players try to take each other out in a typical deathmatch style. ■

FACT

Back when the game had the working title of Furballs, the plot was completely different: you had to save your forest from a group of bears who had built a strip mall in your forest.

GAUNTLET LEGENDS

Year 2000
Publisher Midway Games
Developer Midway Games West

GAUNTLET LEGENDS, THE fifth game in the Gauntlet series (or the sixth if you count US Gold's isometric home computer version of Gauntlet III) was released in arcades in 1998 before being ported to the Dreamcast a couple of years later. As with previous Gauntlet titles, players choose from a group of varied characters and then make their way through enemy-infested worlds, trying to stay alive by topping up their ever-dwindling health with food. While Legends had previously been released on the Nintendo 64 and PlayStation, each port diverged from the arcade version in different ways (the N64 game added an inventory system, while the PlayStation port had much smaller levels). The Dreamcast version is the most authentic but it's still not a complete port: the game has a new physics engine allowing for some new gimmicks like floating platforms, and some of the stages have been reworked. At its core though, the aim is still the same: 1–4 players have to defeat the evil Dark Skorne's armies and save the four realms he's taken over. By the time the game came to Dreamcast an expanded 'sequel' called Gauntlet: Dark Legacy was in arcades, so some elements from that game were added to the Dreamcast port of Legends. Most notably, the four playable characters from Legends (Warrior, Valkyrie, Wizard and Archer) were joined by the four new characters from Dark Legacy (Dwarf, Knight, Sorceress and Jester), giving the player a wider variety of heroes to choose from. ■

FACT

The disc's contents include an unused fake legal screen that says, among other things, that 'this game is supplied to you to brighten your drab, pathetic little life'.

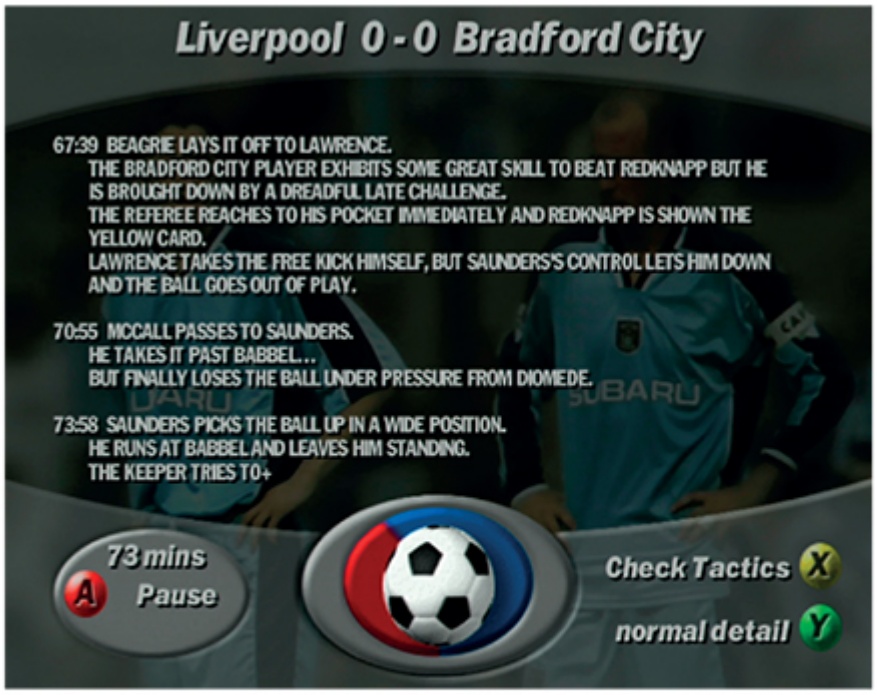
GIANT KILLERS

Year 2001
Publisher AAA / Smoking Gun
Developer IO Productions

OF ALL THE Dreamcast games released exclusively in Europe, Giant Killers is almost certainly the one least likely to appeal to North American players trying to build a complete collection of western titles. Despite the name conjuring up images of epic fantasy battles, it's actually a football management simulator that focuses exclusively on English football. Players can choose any team from the top five leagues in English football at the start of the 2000/01 season (which, at the time, meant the Premier League, Division 1–3 and the Conference), then have to do their best to build them up into, well, giant killers. It's got all the typical features you'd expect from a football management sim at the time, but one thing it doesn't have is any actual rendering of in-match gameplay. Instead, much like the popular Championship Manager games of its era, during matches you're simply given a text commentary of what's going on, which you can filter by level of detail: from being informed of practically every kick of the ball, to just being given the big highlights. While the game features real player names from the five leagues present, the sole focus on English football means you can't actually sign any overseas players, so anyone looking to sign up the likes of Zinedine Zidane, Alessandro Del Piero or Henrik Larsson would be sorely disappointed, and would have to stick with trying to sign John Durnin from Kidderminster instead. ■

FACT

One benefit of a text-based football management game focusing on one country is storage: the PC version of Giant Killers only needs 32MB of hard drive space to install.



GIGA WING

Year 2000
Publisher Capcom
Developer Takumi Corporation

WHEN RENOWNED ARCADE shoot 'em up developer Toaplan disbanded in 1994, its development staff splintered off into various new studios. One of these was Takumi Corporation, a Tokyo-based studio that continued to focus mainly on the shoot 'em up genre. A notable example of this was Giga Wing, a Capcom-published title which was released in arcades in early 1999 before coming to Dreamcast later in the same year. The plot is complete nonsense and revolves around Medallion, a divine stone with the power to bring either great prosperity or destruction to mankind. In the year 2050, the world's civilisations have engaged in a devastating war as they fight to be the ones to take control of Medallion. Deciding to put an end to this, four pilots head out to find Medallion, each armed with a mysterious stone of their own said to be capable of destroying it. Cue a straightforward arcade shoot 'em up which is completely unaffected by such goings-on, and is simply an excuse to pump countless bullets into waves of enemies. Each of the four playable characters has their own ship with its own special shot type, and all characters are also armed with a crucial technique called Reflect Force. At times (especially during the boss fights) the screen can become a sea of bullets, making it nearly impossible to navigate. When this happens, holding the shot button will activate Reflect Force, which soaks up any bullets you fly over and sends them back towards the enemy. ■

FACT

The arcade version of Giga Wing is known as a 'vertizontal', a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up that uses a normal display, rather than the vertical (or portrait) displays used by most arcade shooters.

GIGA WING 2

Year 2001
Publisher Capcom
Developer Takumi Corporation

ALTHOUGH THE FIRST Giga Wing was released to mixed reviews, Capcom and Takumi teamed up for a sequel that offered more of the same, at least in terms of gameplay. The plot is completely different this time: when the manual claims 'it's an entirely new battle', it means it. This time the action focuses on the Serbenian Republic, a region in Eurasia currently in the throes of civil war between Union and Republic armies. The Allied Nations decides to contact Giga Wing, an elite special forces team, and asks them to head to the Serbenian Republic to sort the situation out. Mainly by killing lots of pilots, it seems. The main new feature in Giga Wing 2 is the evolution of the Reflect Force mechanic. Now there are two different types of Reflect Force moves to choose from, called Reflect Barrier and Reflect Laser. Reflect Barrier is the technique from the first game carried over, but Reflect Laser is different in that instead of repelling enemy bullets back towards them, it instead absorbs the bullets and charges up a homing laser attack which can then be fired by the player. The more bullets you absorb the more effective the laser, so there's some strategy involved in when to activate it. The Dreamcast port included an online ranking feature where players could see how they compared against the rest of the world. Given that the game's ridiculous scoring system meant it was possible to end up with scores in the quintillions, this was a potentially humbling experience. ■

FACT

A third and final game in the series called Giga Wing Generations was released in arcades in 2004, and was followed by a PS2 port.

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Rockstar Games
Developer	DMA Design

THE GROUNDBREAKING AND industry-redefining Grand Theft Auto series only made a single appearance on Sega consoles, and that was a Dreamcast port of 1999's Grand Theft Auto 2. This was the last game in the series to be played from a top-down perspective, before Grand Theft Auto III turned up in 2001 and completely turned the medium on its head. GTA 2 is set in the nondescript Anywhere City, and has you playing as a criminal named Claude Speed as he starts off as a petty hoodlum and tries to gain a reputation as one of the city's most notorious criminals.

The game features the same birds-eye viewpoint as the first Grand Theft Auto, and people and cars are 2D sprites as they were before. As in its predecessor, the city itself is still polygonal, but improvements to the sequel's 3D engine mean that things look more detailed and some sections have more verticality, with staircases and rooftop areas. One odd quirk of the game is that the Dreamcast and PlayStation versions both have completely different vibes because they take place at different times of the day. The PC version let players choose between playing during the day or at night, but the PlayStation version only offered daytime play while the Dreamcast version is set entirely at night. While this does give Sega's console the opportunity to show off the sequel's improved lighting effects, it does make the Dreamcast port a noticeably moodier affair.

FACT

Rockstar made an eight-minute live action movie to promote the game. It was shot in New York and stars Scott Maslen, who had appeared in UK TV shows *The Bill* and *Eastenders*, as Claude.

The biggest feature in GTA 2, and one that hasn't made an appearance in any other main GTA release since, is the 'Respect' system. Anywhere City has three main districts, and each district is home to three separate gangs. The first district, for example, hosts the Yakuza (the notorious Japanese crime syndicate), the Loonies (who are based in a psychiatric hospital) and the notorious Zaibatsu Corporation (who appear to be a legit business but deal in narcotics and contract killing). Each gang hates another gang, and feels indifferent to the other. In each district you have a Respect meter which shows your standing with each of the gangs, and this changes as you take on jobs for them. As your respect from a gang grows they'll trust you more, and you'll get access to more difficult (but more lucrative) missions. Inversely, attacking members of other gangs will cause them to lose respect for you, and as your meter drops lower their members will attack you with increasingly more powerful weaponry if you enter their turf.

GTA 2 is probably the least critically acclaimed game in the Grand Theft Auto series, but that may be down to the state of the industry at the time. Fancy, third-person polygonal adventures were very much the big thing then, and while the first GTA already looked quite old-school on PlayStation, GTA 2 on Dreamcast looked even more dated. That's not to say it isn't still a fun game, of course, but when Grand Theft Auto III was released with its third-person open world, GTA 2 was quickly (and maybe unfairly) left in the past. ■

GRANDIA II

Year 2000
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Game Arts

THE ORIGINAL GRANDIA was released on the PlayStation and Saturn, but there was no need to have played it before getting stuck into Grandia II: in typical JRPG fashion (see Final Fantasy and most Dragon Quest titles), the games have practically nothing to do with each other save for some recurring item names and the like. The story revolves around Ryudo, a young 'Geohound' who keeps himself busy by taking on odd jobs. One day he's asked to travel to a church in the village of Carbo and escort its songstress, Elena, to a ceremony elsewhere.

What initially appears to be a standard bodyguard gig soon turns into an epic quest as Ryudo and Elena discover that there's more to their world than meets the eye. Grandia II's battles are turn-based in nature but there's a little more to it than that, thanks to its use of an action bar called the IP (Initiative Point) Gauge. This shows icons representing the hero and enemy characters travelling along a bar: when these icons reach a certain point a command can be entered, and when they reach the end that character performs the command. It gives players a better visual representation of who's due to attack next, and allows for more tactical battling, thanks to the option to use critical attacks, which take more time to pull off but push enemy icons back down the gauge. Grandia II is generally believed to be one of the best RPGs on the Dreamcast, certainly of those released in the west. ■

FACT

A lot of Grandia II's voice cast previously worked on Metal Gear Solid. The actors who voiced Liquid Snake, the Colonel, Naomi, Mei Ling and Vulcan Raven all voiced Grandia II characters.

THE GRINCH

Year 2000
Publisher Konami
Developer Artificial Mind and Movement

RELEASED JUST A few weeks after *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* arrived in cinemas, The Grinch video game is your typical tie-in designed to appeal to the parents who'd just taken their children to see the Jim Carrey movie. It isn't a retelling of the film's story, though, and instead has a plot of its own. While scheming up at his base on the top of Mt Crumpit, the Grinch decides he's going to head down to Whoville and steal Christmas, but before he does he needs to build the various gadgets he'll need to do it. As he climbs his mountain of crates containing parts for his gizmos, he slips and they all crash to the ground, shredding his blueprints and sending their pieces flying off all over Whoville. The Grinch has to make his way through Downtown Whoville, Who Forest, the Who Dump and Who Lake to find his blueprints and build the gadgets he needs to put an end to Christmas once and for all. The game is a straightforward 3D platformer where players have to visit each area and perform a number of tasks, be that ground-pounding presents to break them or smashing snowmen. You have to tick off a number of these tasks before you can visit the next stage, all while trying to collect blueprint pieces that have to then be reassembled to build the gadgets needed to finish the game, including a device which lets him climb walls and a little portable helicopter rotor which lets him fly. ■

FACT

Beat the game with 100 per cent completion and you'll unlock an odd racing mini-game where the Grinch, wearing a leather jacket, races a motorbike against some Whos.

GUNBIRD 2

Year 2000
Publisher Capcom
Developer Psikyo

THE GIGA WING games weren't the only example of Capcom teaming up with an external developer to make arcade shoot 'em ups and later port them to the Dreamcast. The shoot 'em up specialists at Psikyo also joined forces with the publisher to create a sequel to their popular vertical shooter Gunbird (which had previously been published by the likes of Atlus and Jaleco). Gunbird 2 tells the story of the Almighty Potion, which is said to give magical powers to those who drink it. Seven warriors head out to try and find the Almighty Potion by collecting three elements – the Sun, Moon and stars – and bringing them to the Potion God in his underground temple. Along the way, your character of choice has to shoot down any enemies who get in their way, as well as the Queen Pirates, who appear as boss fights at the end of each stage in an attempt to take you out at the last minute and claim your hard work as their own. The playable characters have their own personality and their attacks reflect this: Alucard, for example, is the 'good' son of Dracula and has a smart bomb move that fires a huge deadly crucifix across the screen. The Dreamcast port features two exclusive characters – Morrigan from Darkstalkers and Aine from Samurai Aces – and has three screen options: an 'arcade mode' which turns the action sideways for play on a vertical monitor, and two 'original' modes which either crop the screen or let the player scroll it a bit by moving up and down. ■

FACT

With a bit of hackery the game can be made to run in VGA mode, but it's really not recommended because the action on some stages slows to a complete crawl.

GUNDAM SIDE STORY 079: RISE FROM THE ASHES

Year 2000
Publisher Bandai
Developer Bandai

SUCH WAS THE popularity of the *Mobile Suit Gundam* anime series (and later manga, movie and plastic model kits) that there have been over 80 Gundam games released over the years. Very few of these ever made it outside of Japan, but one title that did reach North America was Gundam Side Story 0079. Originally released in Japan in 1999 to celebrate 20 years of Gundam, this is set in Australia after the end of the 'One Year War' and follows the White Dingo Team, a mobile suit platoon of Earth Federation Forces. Playing as the unit's commander, Master Pierce Rayer, you have to lead your team through nine missions, all of which are played from a first-person perspective, letting you feel what it's really like to take control of a Gundam (assuming they're controlled with Dreamcast controllers, which they aren't). For the most part you get to choose between two mobile suits: the RGM-79 GM, which is a fairly standard model, and the RGC-80 GM Cannon, which has a big cannon attached to its shoulder (and is therefore heavier as a result). While for the most part combat takes place from a distance as you try to take down enemies with your guns, if you get within 100 metres of an enemy while locked onto them you'll engage AD Lock-on, which automatically switches over to close-quarters combat, allowing you to deliver melee attacks. ■

FACT

In Japan, a special 'Premium Disc' for the game was given away for free by Bandai. This was an expansion disc that added a new mission and some new weapons like the Hyper Hammer.

HEADHUNTER

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Amuze

IN EARLY TWENTY-FIRST century Los Angeles, gang warfare and a steep rise in crime have led to a near-fascist regime as severe laws are put in place in an attempt to restore order. The media becomes heavily censored, citizens are judged on their worth to the state, and anyone caught breaking the law is either chipped with an experimental implant or has their organs donated to more worthy citizens. Leading the charge is the Anti-Crime Network (ACN), a privatised law enforcement company which hires out 'Headhunters' to track down criminals and use hi-tech weaponry to bring them down.

The game opens with Jack Wade – a former cop turned Headhunter – waking from a coma with temporary amnesia. Jack soon learns that ACN chief Christopher Stern has been murdered, and his daughter Angela wants to hire Jack to find his killer. It's up to Jack to take on the biggest Headhunt of his career, while hopefully recovering his memory along the way and remembering what actually happened to him. And if you don't think there are going to be any big twists or revelations in this one, then you've clearly never seen or played anything with an amnesia plot before.

Headhunter arrived so late in the Dreamcast's life – a full eight months after the console had already been discontinued – that the Swedish-developed game was only released in Europe. This may go some way to explaining why it isn't one of the most widely cited games of its era,

despite the fact that in reality it was an exceptionally advanced game for the time and one of the first examples of what could be considered a modern third-person action adventure title. Jack travels between missions on his bike, riding through an open world city area reminiscent of Grand Theft Auto III (which had only made its groundbreaking PS2 debut a month earlier). Combat includes a cover system – where Jack can hide behind nearby walls and crates, leaning out to take shots before returning to cover – long before the success of Gears of War turned it into an essential mechanic for a while. And the voice acting is of a consistently high quality, certainly far more believable than most of the delightfully cheesy nonsense found elsewhere on the Dreamcast.

This is all supported with a regular helping of live-action cutscenes showing TV news reports from the aforementioned state-censored media. The satire is high in these, bringing to mind the TV broadcasts in *RoboCop*, which had a similar 'the future is a bit rubbish actually' message (the game's creative director John Kroknes said he was influenced by the films of Paul Verhoeven, and it shows). Headhunter was eventually ported to the PS2, finally bringing the game to North America, with a sequel following a few years later. In the years since the series has generally been forgotten, but at the time – certainly in Europe – it was considered one of the last truly groundbreaking games to be released on the Dreamcast, and despite some clunky controls it does still hold up today. ■

FACT

The game's soundtrack was recorded in Studio 1 at Abbey Road Studios, the same place where the soundtracks for *Star Wars Episode I* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* were recorded.

HEAVY METAL: GEOMATRIX

Year	2001
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

HEAVY METAL IS a US sci-fi comic that started in the late '70s and presented stories with more mature content like copious nudity and graphic violence. This video game spin-off, which started off as an arcade game before being ported to the Dreamcast, isn't quite as explicit and isn't specifically based on any stories or characters from the comic. Instead, the fighters in Geomatrix were designed by *Heavy Metal*'s editor Kevin Eastman (who had previously co-created Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles) and one of its most popular artists, Simon Bisley. The game is similar to Cyber Troopers Virtual On, in that players freely run around 3D arenas trying to take down their opponent with guns or close-quarters combat. Unlike Virtual On, however, battles can take place between up to four players, making for some rather unfair stages where you have to take on multiple opponents, which can be overwhelming given the occasionally clunky controls. As well as the main arcade mode – where you take on a series of fights until you reach the final boss – there's also a Dreamcast-exclusive mode called Chaos Matrix. This is a series of time trial stages in which the player, placed in a room made up solely of glowing grids, has to find and collect a number of keys and reach a goal before time runs out, while avoiding attacks from an enemy fighter running around. The game is also accompanied by a suitably 'heavy metal' soundtrack featuring such bands as Megadeth, Dust to Dust, Corrosion of Conformity and Halford. ■

FACT

An animated movie based on the *Heavy Metal* comic arrived in cinemas in 1981, but didn't appear on home video until 1996 due to music licensing issues.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Year	2000
Publisher	TalonSoft
Developer	Illusion Softworks

INITIALLY RELEASED ON PC in the summer of 1999, Hidden & Dangerous was brought to the Dreamcast almost exactly a year later. It's set during the events of the Second World War and puts you in charge of the British Special Air Service (SAS) as they do their bit in helping bring down the Nazis. The game features 23 missions spread out over six separate campaigns, which range from disrupting the Germans' shipping on the Danube river to destroying their labs to make it harder for them to develop atomic weaponry. Gameplay takes the form of a tactical shooter similar to Rainbow Six, where the player has to choose a team of eight soldiers from a pool of around 40, then choose four of them for each mission based on their individual skills. Some of them obviously have impressive shooting accuracy, but others may be better at stealth, strength (meaning he can carry more items) or endurance (meaning he can take more damage). When a soldier dies he's dead forever, so it's important not to go in all guns blazing unless you consider yourself something of a Game Over screen enthusiast. Although there are four soldiers in your team you only control one at a time, and the others can be instructed with commands like 'Follow Me', 'Stop' or 'Hold Fire'. Players can also bring up a 'time bar' which lets them give soldiers specific timing-based instructions, meaning your tactics can get quite detailed if you want to take the time to plan them out. ■

FACT

Hidden and Dangerous 2 was released on PC in 2003. Both games were well-received by the press, but the series ended after the second game.

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	AM1

ON 18 DECEMBER 1998, AMS Agent Thomas Rogan and his partner 'G' were sent to a mansion in Europe to destroy the undead creatures who had been unleashed there by renowned biochemist Dr Curien. Although Rogan and G were able to save the day, G continued to investigate the incident for the year that followed, eventually leading him to Venice where, as luck would have it, another zombie outbreak then took place. House of the Dead 2 opens with two new agents, James Taylor (not the folk singer) and Gary Stewart (not the country singer), as they head to Venice to evacuate the city, try to find G and ideally kill every undead thing that happens to be shuffling around. The result is what's generally considered to be one of Sega's best light gun shooters, party down to its action but also in large part due to its entertainingly abysmal voice acting in which almost every line in the game sounds like it was recorded by someone who'd never spoken in their life before and felt like giving it a go for the first time.

For the most part, The House of the Dead 2 is exactly what you'd expect from a polygonal light gun shooter of the era. Enemies appear from all directions and you have to gun them down before they reach and harm you. Given that most of the baddies in the game are zombies, headshots obviously tend to be more effective at bringing them down quickly. Ammo, meanwhile, is infinite, with reloading a simple case of hitting the B button (if you're using a controller). One thing the game did boast that was relatively uncommon for the genre at the time was multiple routes through each stage depending on whether you rescued certain civilians. If you were able to prevent them from being attacked by a creature, they'd give you access to a different route through the stage, but if you failed you'd have to go a different way (usually one that was slightly trickier).

FACT

The game's two-player co-op mode is the canon version of the story. In House of the Dead lore, both characters carry out the mission, and the dialogue changes when playing solo.

The Dreamcast port contains a solid recreation of the arcade game, but also includes three extra modes: Training, Boss and Original. Boss mode is a simple time trial where you get to choose any of the bosses you've already reached and try your best to defeat them as quickly as possible, while Training gives you a series of missions to try and clear, such as presenting you with a series of civilian attacks and asking you to rescue everyone without a single failure. Meanwhile, Original mode tries to add a little variety to things by letting the player choose items before starting their next playthrough. At first there are only a few of these, enabling you to increase your magazine size, make your shots more powerful or add a couple of credits, but eventually you can unlock new outfits, guns and bonus points. It all combines for a solid enough port of a classic shooter, even if playing with a controller can take some practice.

HOYLE CASINO

Year	2000
Publisher	Sierra Attractions
Developer	Sierra On-Line

THE HOYLE SERIES of games first started in 1989 and generally focused on card and board games. On occasion the series would spin out into a specific area, which is where Hoyle Casino comes into play. As the name suggests, the game lets you live the casino experience without leaving the comfort of your couch, thereby ensuring you don't risk bankrupting yourself in real life (or, of course, actually win any real money). Set in a fictional Las Vegas style casino, Hoyle features eight different types of game to choose from: Blackjack, Craps, Poker, Roulette, Pai Gow Poker, Slots, Video Poker and Video Slots. You start with $5,000 in your account and the aim, in case it wasn't obvious, is to try to earn as much as you can. If you fancy something a little meatier then some of the games have optional Tournament modes where you can take on a series of AI opponents, while the game's extensive option menus for each game allow you to customise a wide variety of rules (the game boasts 'over 350' variations). Of course, gambling can be a financially crippling pursuit, and Hoyle Casino doesn't like to put a negative spin on things, so while it's possible to run out of money here it's never doom and gloom. As you get better you can take out credit cards that let you borrow even more money, and if you're not quite as lucky and end up bankrupt the casino will offer you a no-strings loan. Which is definitely how it happens in real life. ■

FACT

There were more than 75 PC games with the Hoyle branding released over the years. Um, collect them all! Or something.

HYDRO THUNDER

Year	1999
Publisher	Midway
Developer	Eurocom

THE FIRST GAME in Midway's 'Thunder' series, Hydro Thunder is what you'd get if you took your typical arcade racing game and put it on water. The game puts players behind the controls of a high-speed powerboat, and issues them a simple goal: win the race. At first there are only three tracks to choose from: the simple oval-shaped Thunder Park, Lost Island (a volcanic South Pacific river with a waterfall you can pass through) and Arctic Circle (containing glaciers and ice caves). By finishing in at least third place in each of these races, you'll unlock a bunch more tracks and vehicles, and can continue in this way until all 13 tracks and 13 boats are available. The main game mechanic is a speed boost which can be topped up by driving over icons on the water. When your boost completely runs out your booster engine folds away and takes a few seconds to unfurl again when you collect more boost, so part of the strategy involves always keeping at least a tiny bit of boost in reserve to keep the booster out and ready. Playing well will result in some wonderfully odd vehicles being unlocked, including the Tinytanic (a small-scale replica of the Titanic) and the Chumdinger, a fishing dinghy with an old fisherman and a dog who barks at opponents when the booster is activated. Hydro Thunder may not be the most realistic racing game, but its emphasis on huge jumps and ridiculous boosts makes it a fun arcade racer. ■

FACT

Midway Arcade Treasures 3, released on GameCube, PS2 and Xbox, includes eight arcade racers. Hydro Thunder is there but it's not the arcade version: it's a port of the Dreamcast one.

ILLBLEED

Year 2001
Publisher AIA
Developer Crazy Games

THE SUCCESS OF Resident Evil meant survival horror games were being churned out left, right and centre by the turn of the millennium, with numerous studios trying to incorporate their own unique spin to make their game stand out. Illbleed's gimmicks are its quirky B-movie style storyline and the way it tasks players with keeping their protagonist calm and healthy in order to help them survive. The game takes place at Illbleed, a horror theme park which is offering visitors a ridiculous $500 million if they can somehow reach the end. Eriko Christy – whose dad also owned a horror theme park – declines her friends' invitation to visit Illbleed with them, but when they fail to come back a few days later she heads to Illbleed to try to find them.

Illbleed consists of six different stages, each contained within a different magical cinema. Each has a suitably hokey B-movie plot: the first, for example, is called The Home Run of Death and is about a father whose son burned to death while he was practising baseball and now vows to kill everyone with a blowtorch for revenge. The aim is to meet the objectives in each stage (such as calming down the father in the first one), while also finding and rescuing Eriko's three friends, who can then be controlled once they're discovered.

Shortly after you enter each stage you're encouraged to find the Horror Monitor, which is more or less essential for getting through each scenario. The Horror Monitor can be used to scan each area in search of potential points of interest: these could be items, scary set-piece traps or nothing at all. Tagging things with the Horror Monitor uses up adrenaline points (a sort of currency), but correctly tagging scary traps lets you gain adrenaline back. If you fail to tag a scary trap it'll affect your character, either causing them to bleed or making their heart rate rise. If they end up bleeding too much or their heart beats too quickly they'll collapse and die. Fun! Success, then, involves slowly making your way through each area, relying on your senses of sight, hearing, smell and your 'sixth sense' to identify potential traps, then tagging them with the Horror Monitor to defuse them. It isn't all frights and traps, however: occasionally monsters will also appear and attack you, forcing you to engage in combat with them. If you're unarmed you're stuck with punches and slaps, but some stages also have weapons that can be found: that first level, for example, contains the son's baseball bat, which can be used for self-defence.

FACT

Want to collect every Dreamcast game officially released in Taiwan? Good news: this is the only one. Bad news: they only made 300 copies, so zhu ni hao yun with that.

Illbleed isn't without its issues: the Horror Monitor leads to a very slow-paced game, while the voice acting is comically bad. But the game has a small but dedicated cult following due to its charming B-movie sensibilities and its multiple endings. Its gameplay is unarguably unwieldy by modern standards but there's enough interesting ideas in there to make it worth a look today, if only to see a 'failed' alternative take on the survival horror genre. ■

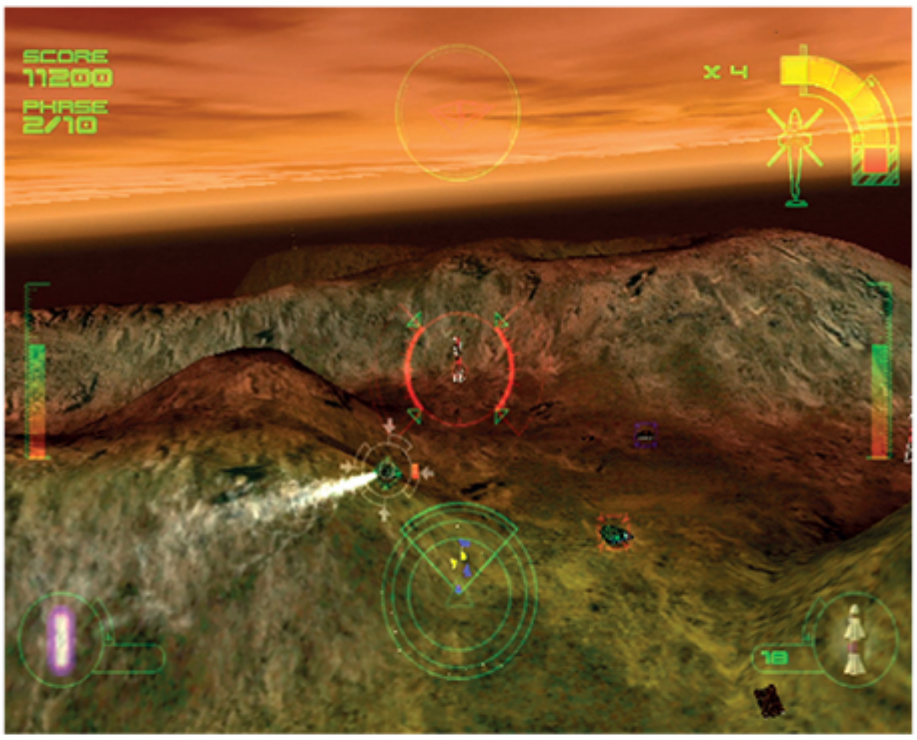
INCOMING

Year 1998
Publisher Interplay
Developer Rage Software

IN MAY 2008, Earth's international moon base was attacked by UFOs. Realising an alien attack on Earth itself was a real possibility, the planet's forces evacuated the base and got to work building a tracking facility in Africa. By early 2009 the tracking facility was ready, but the aliens soon got wind of it and headed out to attack it. It's up to the player to protect Earth and destroy the incoming(™) alien waves over the course of a 60-mission campaign covering six separate locations: defending the base in Kenya, attacking an alien base in the Arctic, defending oil rigs in the Atlantic Ocean, protecting fleets of ships in Florida, attacking another alien base on the moon and finally travelling to the aliens' home planet in the Crab Nebula to take them on at their home turf. Depending on the mission players will take control of either a static gun turret, a surface craft, a helicopter or a plane, with tasks ranging from simple defence of an area to transporting cargo. As well as the Campaign mode (where you take on each of the missions in order) there's also an Arcade mode where you get to pick a craft and a location and just go wild with weaponry. There's also a split-screen two-player mode with two competitive games: Body Count (where you have to kill more enemies than your opponent) and Defense Force (where you have to protect your base from alien attacks better than your opponent does). ■

FACT

Rage stated in a 1997 interview that it was considering a Nintendo 64 version of Incoming. This never saw the light of day.



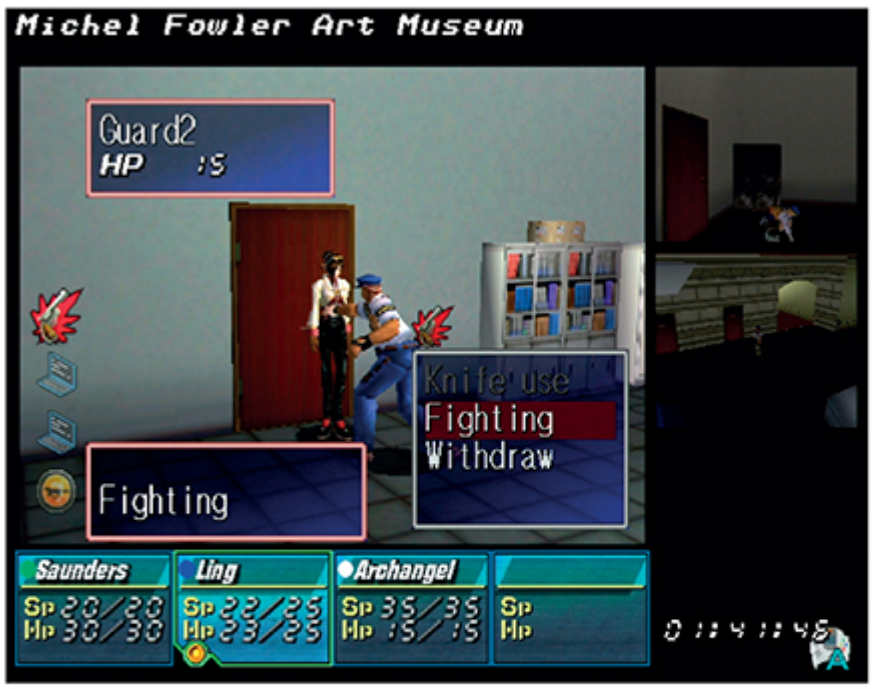
INDUSTRIAL SPY: OPERATION ESPIONAGE

Year 1999
Publisher UFO Interactive Games
Developer HuneX

IF INDUSTRIAL SPY feels like a bit of an awkward title, it's supposed to be a play on words: I-Spy, geddit? Regardless, the game takes place in the early 2000s and makes players the boss of a company called Blitzstrahl. As large corporations replace governments and seize control of political and financial power, they become so large that making strategic decisions becomes a problem. That's where Blitzstrahl comes in: it's an 'Industrial Spy' agency that can be hired out by said corporations, and sends out its agents to break into other companies and find confidential information. Because you're the boss of Blitzstrahl you don't actually take part in any of this espionage yourself: instead, you're tasked with carrying out your clients' missions by selecting the right agents for each job, then commanding them as you watch from a series of security cameras. Although you get to see each of your agents on separate small screens, you can only issue commands to one agent at a time: the key, then, is to guide one of your agents to their next location while at the same time keeping an eye on your other agents to make sure they don't get into scrapes. Each spy has their own set of skills which means choosing the right ones for each job is important: some are better at computer hacking, for example, while others may be better with electrical circuitry or picking locks. Some work with explosives, while some can even hypnotise guards. ■

FACT

The Japanese version of the game is called Espion-age-nts, so it's probably a draw as to which region got the worst title.



IRON ACES

Year 2000
Publisher Xicat Interactive
Developer Marionette

IRON ACES IS a Second World War aerial combat game that seems keen to both embrace and distance itself from the war at the same time. Although it bills itself as 'high speed aerial WWII combat' on the front cover, and although it clearly states that the major players in the game are the British and American Allies, and the German and Japanese Axis, for some reason it also insists on renaming the land involved. So Britain and the US are now Trincer and Valiant respectively, while Germany and Japan now go by the names Blocken and Yamato. You play as an American pilot taking on a series of missions in which, aided by the British, you attempt to stop the Axis powers from trying to take over the world. As you play through the game's 17 missions you're given a selection of aircraft to choose from, most of which are American planes ranging from the P-40 Warhawk and F4F Wildcat to the TBD Devastator and B-29 Superfortress (though any wannabe plucky Brits can use a Hurricane or Spitfire should they so wish). The gameplay itself falls somewhere in between arcade-style and simulation, in that the plane handling has been simplified and infinite ammo is an option, but taking down enemies can still be a lengthy and at times difficult process, and bombing can be exceptionally challenging to those just looking for some mindless dogfighting action. Critical response was therefore middling for the most part. ■

FACT

The game's box invites you to 'party like it's 1942', which sort of gives the impression it's not taking the whole Second World War thing massively seriously.

JEREMY MCGRATH SUPERCROSS 2000

Year 2000
Publisher Acclaim Sports
Developer Acclaim Studios Salt Lake City

IN 1998, ACCLAIM released Jeremy McGrath Supercross 98, a supercross motorcycle racing game presumably designed to appeal to the 'extreme sports' market that had primarily been established due to the success of the Tony Hawk games. The '98 title was only released on the PlayStation, but a couple of years later Acclaim then released a sequel on multiple formats, including the Dreamcast. Naturally, the game lets you play as McGrath himself, but there are 11 other real-life supercross racers in there too, including the likes of Travis Pastrana, Jimmy Button and Sebastian Tortelli, though if you don't like the look of any of them (what did they ever do to you?) you can create your own rider from scratch. There are 16 tracks in total in the game: eight indoor tracks taking place in arenas, and eight outdoor tracks. Given the nature of the sport you shouldn't expect too much variety, but there is an option to create your own circuits using a built-in track editor should you get bored with what's on offer and want to mix things up a bit. In the game's main Series mode, players start off with access to the 125cc Outdoor series. By winning tournaments you can eventually gain access to Indoor and Combined series, as well as 250cc variations of each series. It wouldn't be an extreme sports game without suitably rocking music, so The Offspring's track Genocide makes an appearance. ■

FACT

At the time the game was released, McGrath had been the AMA Supercross Champion six times. He won it a seventh time in 2000, and still holds the record for total AMA Supercross race wins.

JET SET RADIO

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Smilebit

IT COULD BE argued that of all the games released on the Dreamcast, Jet Set Radio is the most stylistically unique. It may feel impossible now to remember a time when cel-shaded video games weren't around, but as the first notable game to introduce the clean, outlined art style, it instantly raised eyebrows for its colourful, unique look. The game is set in the present day and initially follows the newly-formed GGs, a three-member gang who specialise in riding around on rollerblades and spraying graffiti. At the start of the game, it's up to the GG's to take on three rival gangs: the heartbroken all-girl Love Shockers, the technophile Noise Tanks and the monster movie-loving Poison Jam.

Although you only start with three characters in your gang – Beat, Gum and Tab – as you play through the game you'll be approached by rivals and given challenges which, if completed, will convince them to join the GGs, at which point they'll become playable too. Much of the game involves Street stages, in which you skate freely around a certain area of Tokyo looking for rival gang graffiti so you can spray your own tags on it and assert your gang's dominance. Naturally, the local Tokyo law enforcement isn't too chuffed with this so before long the cops appear and you have to outrun them (including the rather unhinged Captain Onishima who's more than happy to fire a gun at you) while trying to spray every tag on the stage. There are other types of levels in there

to mix things up, ranging from chasing and spraying rival gang members, to the aforementioned rival challenges, to trial stages where you have to tag everything within a certain time or beat a high score.

This is all supported with one of the finest video game soundtracks ever made, mainly thanks to composer Hideki Naganuma who contributed the majority of the music tracks (with contributions from the likes of Toronto, BB Rights and Sega regular Richard Jacques). The fusion of hip-hop, funk, electro dance and J-Pop music – and even some metal in the western versions – combines for one of the most toe-tapping soundtracks in gaming history, and something that this author is all too happy to crank out during car trips to this day. A cooler video game soundtrack you'd struggle to find.

Jet Set Radio is also interesting in that all three major versions of the game are different. The original Japanese release was all well and good, but when it came to North America (complete with a name change to Jet Grind Radio), it added a bunch of new music tracks and two new stages based on New York. The European version, arguably the best of the bunch, reverted the name back to its original Japanese title, kept the new stages and added a few more brilliant music tracks. Although all three versions are still great games, then, the European version is the one to get if you have the luxury of choice. ■

FACT

Don't feel bad for Japanese players: in 2001 they got De La Jet Set Radio, an improved re-release which fixed bugs and included many of the songs that had been added to the western versions.

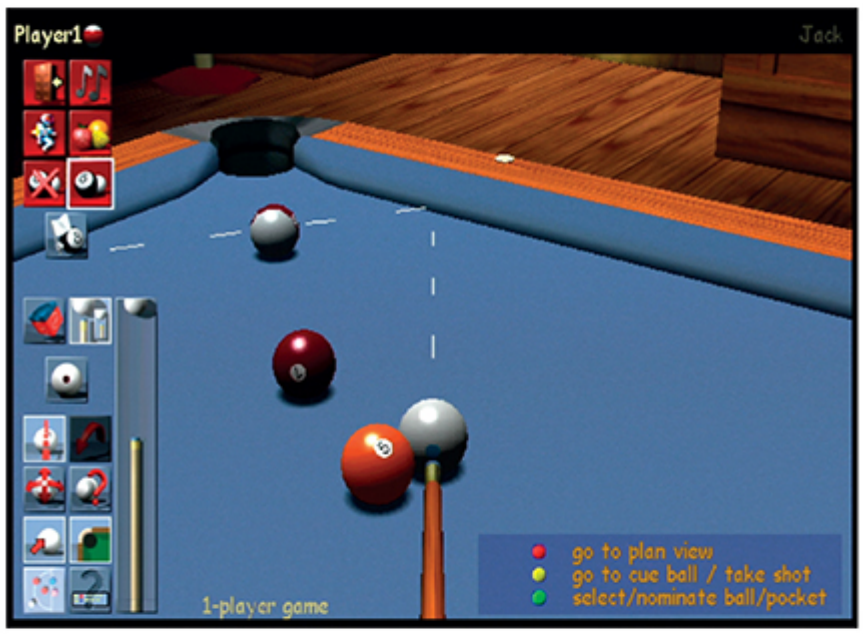
JIMMY WHITE'S 2: CUEBALL

Year 2000
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Awesome Developments

THE 1991 GAME Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker (and its subsequent spin-off Archer MacLean's Pool a year later) was widely regarded as the finest digital representation of snooker at that point. It would be a number of years before the game would receive a sequel, which originally debuted on PC in 1999 before being ported to the Dreamcast. Cueball lets players choose between either snooker or pool, essentially delivering them two games in one. It also boasts its predecessor's slightly offbeat sense of humour: players can activate a BeeCam mode whenever they like, which makes a bumblebee appear in the room and fly around, enabling the player to view the room from above. If snooker and pool aren't your thing (in which case you shouldn't really be playing this in the first place, to be fair), Cueball also includes a number of other pub games including darts, checkers/draughts, a slot machine and even an arcade cabinet featuring Dropzone, developer Archer MacLean's first major hit game. The original 1991 Jimmy White's was renowned for its 3D table, which at the time was quite an impressive feat of polygonal programming. Nearly a decade later the trick wasn't quite so groundbreaking, but the ability to fully move the camera around the table and line up each shot from any angle was a welcome one nonetheless. Ultimately, it was MacLean's detailed physics calculations that made the first game feel so realistic, and that's the case here too. ■

FACT

A third and final game in the series, Jimmy White's Cueball World, was released on the PC in 2001. It was planned for PS2 and Xbox too, but these versions were scrapped.



JOJO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE

Year 1999
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

THIS ONE-ON-ONE FIGHTING game is actually two titles in one. In 1998 Capcom released an arcade game based on the popular manga *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*: this arcade game was known as JoJo's Venture in the west. Nine months later Capcom released an updated version named JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Heritage for the Future, which increased the roster size from 14 to 22 fighters and threw in tweaks and new moves for some of the returning characters. This Dreamcast port is actually both versions in one, allowing you to choose which one to play when the game boots up. Of course, it could be argued that having the original version in there is a bit pointless given the update improves on it in every way, but for the sake of completion, just go with it. The game is similar in style to other 2D Capcom fighters of the era: it used the same Capcom CPS-3 arcade board as all three versions of Street Fighter III, so it's of a similar visual quality to those. Combat, however, differs in that it revolves around the use of Stands, which are physical manifestations of each character's life energy. In this game this essentially means they can be summoned on-screen to fight alongside you, almost as a co-op partner, but this brings with it risks and rewards. While a Stand is out you'll be able to do extra damage and gain other skills like double-jumping, but since you share an energy bar it also means the opponent now has two targets to hit. ■

FACT

The game was re-released in Japan a year later with added support for Matching Service, Capcom's online multiplayer framework.

KAO THE KANGAROO

Year 2000
Publisher Titus Software
Developer X-Ray Interactive

BY THE TURN of the millennium, the anthropomorphic animal platform game mascot fad that had originally exploded with the release of Sonic the Hedgehog was very much still in full swing. One such example of this trend in action was Kao the Kangaroo, a platformer starring a mirthful marsupial wearing a pair of boxing gloves (so his name's pronounced 'K.O.', geddit). Kao was minding his own business at home one day when he was suddenly captured by a hunter and his cronies. It's up to Kao to find his way back to his home in Australia while avoiding the numerous hostile creatures trying to prevent him from reaching his destination. Being a boxing kangaroo, Kao is armed with a couple of different punches, allowing him to give as good as he gets as he explores the game's 25 stages, which are split into five themed worlds. While the vast majority of the game consists of fairly straightforward platforming action, there are occasions where you can use a hang glider, ride a snowboard, drive a powerboat and so on. On his journey he also encounters five bosses: a swaggering bear, a hook-handed ship captain, the Greek god Zeus, an alien in a metal spacesuit and finally the hunter who started this nonsense off in the first place. Kao the Kangaroo is quite a slow-paced platformer but it's also harmless enough and was met with a suitably placid critical reception. ■

FACT

If you consider the name Kao an awful pun that's harmful to your sensibilities, it could have been worse: the game was originally going to be called Denis the Kangaroo.

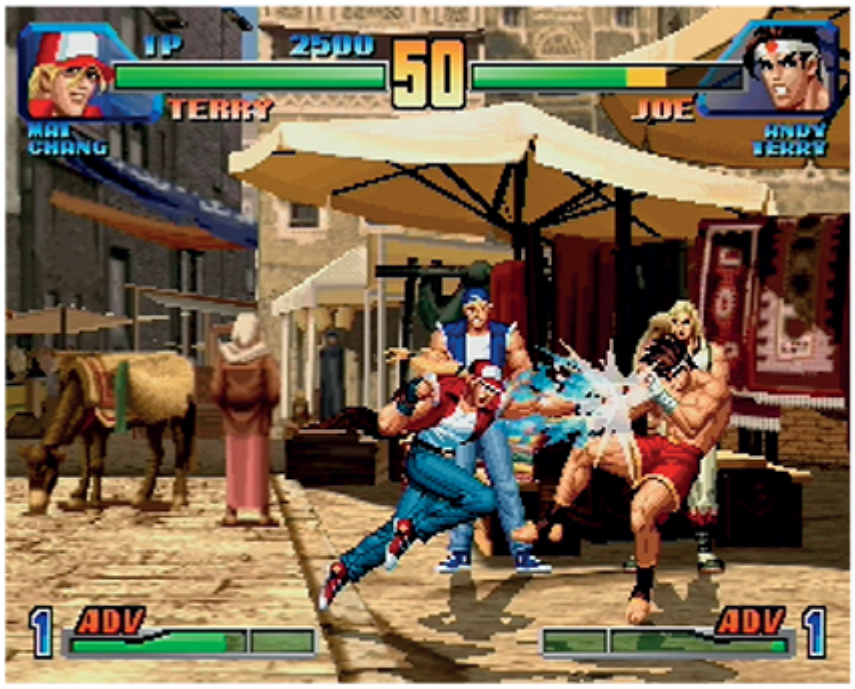
THE KING OF FIGHTERS: DREAM MATCH 1999

Year 1999
Publisher SNK
Developer SNK

DON'T BE MISLED by the title: this is actually a Dreamcast version of The King of Fighters '98, rather than the '99 edition. What's more, it's not just a straight port but a complete remake designed to take advantage of the Dreamcast's polygon-pushing abilities. Whereas the normal arcade and Neo-Geo version of '98 featured sprite-based backgrounds like most other 2D fighting games of its era, Dream Match 1999 replaces them all with fully 3D, polygonal versions, meaning as the screen scrolls to the side they turn realistically in line with the camera's panning. This new art style divided players, some of whom felt the jump to 3D background led to a drop in detail, particularly because SNK's pixel-drawn fighting game backgrounds are considered works of digital art by some. The graphical style aside, Dream Match 1999 offers everything KOF '98 did, including a massive roster of over 40 fighters consisting of every character from the previous King of Fighters games. In terms of gameplay, not a lot has changed compared to its predecessor The King of Fighters '97: the main gimmick is still the ability to choose between two fighting styles called Advanced (where you use rolling sidesteps to evade and use special moves to build up your POW meter), and Extra (which plays more like KOF '94 and '95 and uses the dodge mode from those games, while the POW meter is charged manually). It's really the roster that's the selling point of this one, then. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version has a special anime intro created by Digimation KK, which would later merge with anime studio Gonzo and make the likes of Afro Samurai and Full Metal Panic.



THE KING OF FIGHTERS: EVOLUTION

Year 2000
Publisher Agetec
Developer SNK

BECAUSE THE DREAMCAST version of The King of Fighters '99 didn't make it to North America until the end of 2000, it made sense to ditch the yearly numbering scheme altogether to avoid confusion (though in Japan, where it was released in March 2000, it does keep the '99 branding). The King of Fighters Evolution, then, does the same thing with KOF '99 as Dream Match 1999 did with KOF '98, in that it takes the existing arcade game and replaces all its sprite-based backgrounds with polygonal ones, leading to the same arguments as before. In terms of gameplay, the main addition in KOF '99 is the Striker system: instead of choosing three fighters for your team as you usually do, this time you choose four. Before each fight, you select three of them to form the team and the fourth will act as the Striker, which means that for a certain number of times in each battle they can be called to jump in at the press of a button to perform a special move, then jump off-screen again. The Dreamcast version builds on this by adding an Extra Strikers section in the character select screen: this adds a further 10 guest characters who aren't playable in the main roster but can be called in as a Striker. Evolution was to mark the end of the King of Fighters series on Dreamcast in the west, but as you'll see later, Japan would get a further two entries. ■

FACT

Evolution also adds two new stages not seen in the standard version of KOF '99: an amusement park and a 'Cuckoo Clock Tower' stage.

KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS: THE NIGHTMARE CHILD

Year 2000
Publisher Take-Two Interactive
Developer Tremor Entertainment

ROCK BAND KISS have been no strangers to odd media tie-ins over the years: if you're able to, I urge you to track down the bizarre TV superhero movie *Kiss Meets the Phantom of the Park*. One of its odder ventures was *Kiss: Psycho Circus*, a comic book series published by Spawn creator Todd McFarlane. The Nightmare Child was a video game take on the comic, and revolves around four chaps – Pablo, Patrick, Spades and Gabe – who play in a Kiss tribute band. One day, the four turn up to a beaten-down roadhouse to perform, only to discover there's nobody there. That's because they were brought there by Madame Raven, a clairvoyant who gives them the power to turn into the 'Four-Who-Are-One', which is basically the four members of Kiss if they were supernatural beings instead. The lads have a clear(ish) goal: using their newfound powers they have to gather each Kiss member's armour so they can defeat the Nightmare Child, the resurrected seed of the Nightmare King. It's slightly different from Kao the Kangaroo's plot, in other words. The game is a first-person shooter in which you get to control all four band members as they melee and shoot various creatures. Naturally, Kiss music makes occasional appearances, with the likes of 'Detroit Rock City', 'Shout it out Loud', 'God of Thunder' and 'Rock and Roll All Night' piping up from time to time. ■

FACT

In 1977, Kiss extracted some of their blood and gave it to Marvel Comics, where it was then mixed with red ink and used to publish a special Kiss comic 'printed in real Kiss blood'.

THE LAST BLADE 2: HEART OF THE SAMURAI

Year	2000
Publisher	Agetec
Developer	SNK

ALTHOUGH SNK IS known (among other things) for its Samurai Shodown series, that wasn't the only weapons-based 2D fighting game it gave us. The Last Blade was released in 1997 and was set during the Bakumatsu era in Japan (somewhere between 1853–1867), incorporating Japanese mythology. The game was popular enough to justify a sequel, so The Last Blade 2 followed a year later, with a Dreamcast port eventually arriving a further two years after that. It was worth the wait, mind you, because The Last Blade 2 is a typically solid fighting game of the level of quality you'd expect from the studio behind the King of Fighters, Fatal Fury and Samurai Shodown series. Set a year after the events of the first game, The Last Blade 2 sees fighters coming together in an attempt to stop the spirits of the underworld entering the world of the living. It adds three new characters to the mix, as well as a new boss (who, true to SNK form, is typically overpowered). On top of that, the Dreamcast version adds a further character, Musashi, who could be unlocked with a hidden code in the first game but couldn't be used in Versus matches, but is available for Versus this time. The combat revolves around three different fighting styles: Speed mode lets players chain several normal attacks into a special and execute 'speed combos', while Power mode gives players increased damage and access to 'Super Desperation Moves', and EX mode (which is new to the sequel) brings together some of the benefits of each. ■

FACT

Japanese retro publisher Hamster Corporation released The Last Blade on PS4 as part of its ACA Neo Geo collection: this is the cheapest way to legally obtain it.

LE MANS 24 HOURS

Year	2000
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Infogrames Melbourne House

KNOWN IN THE US as Test Drive Le Mans, this racing game is naturally based on the world famous 24 Heures du Mans race held every year near the town of Le Mans in France, where cars are ranked based on how much distance they are able to cover over the course of a full 24 hours of racing. Naturally, the main selling point of the game is its Le Mans mode, which lets the player take on the iconic race itself: and yes, you can even race for a full 24 hours, if you're an absolute maniac. For those for whom that pesky thing known as a life can get in the way, there's also the option to speed up the game clock, allowing you to take part in a 6-hour, 1-hour, 30-minute or 10-minute version of the race instead, with things like the day/night cycle and fuel consumption changing to reflect this. Thankfully, if you do fancy the idea of taking on the full 24-hour race but don't have the stamina needed for such a session, you can save any time you go in the pits, allowing you to resume at a later day. If such feats of endurance aren't your bag, there's also a more traditional Championship mode, where you make your way through a season of races that includes the Le Mans track but also takes in other courses such as Donington, Catalunya and Suzuka. ■

FACT

In 1955 Le Mans was home to the biggest disaster in motorsport history, when a Mercedes-Benz car crashed and exploded at 125mph, sending debris into the crowd and killing 83 people. Mercedes-Benz retired from motor racing for 34 years.

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER

Year 2000
Publisher Eidos Interactive
Developer Crystal Dynamics

SOUL REAVER IS the second game in the Legacy of Kain series, and was written and directed by future Uncharted creator Amy Hennig. The first game, 1996's Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain, followed the titular Kain – a reluctant nobleman turned vampire – as he attempted to kill the nine guardians of the Pillars of Nosgoth and cleanse the land of Nosgoth. At the end of the first game (spoilers!) Kain discovers that he's the ninth guardian, and the player is given a choice: Kain can either kill himself to make the vampires extinct and return peace to Nosgoth, or say 'sod that' and damn the world to destruction. Soul Reaver takes place 1,500 years after these events, and follows the far more interesting canon that Kain took the latter option, causing the Pillars to collapse and turning Nosgoth into a desolate wasteland while he became the most powerful entity in the land.

In the sequel players control Raziel, who we first meet as one of Kain's vampire lieutenants. As time has been passing the vampires have been physically evolving into more advanced forms, but when Raziel turns up one day with a pair of wings, a livid Kain – who is always supposed to evolve first – tears his wings apart and orders that he be executed by being thrown into the Lake of the Dead. After 500 years of agony in the Lake of the Dead, Raziel wakes in the Abyss, where he discovers that the Elder God – an ancient and powerful entity who lives under Nosgoth, unbeknownst to anyone – has resurrected him as a wraith and tasked him with becoming a Soul Reaver, with the ultimate aim being to track down and kill Kain, restoring Nosgoth to its previous glory once and for all.

Like its predecessor, Soul Reaver is a third-person action adventure, but this time players control Raziel and Kain is the final boss, not the hero. Given that Raziel has ghostly new abilities, the main selling point of this sequel is the ability to switch between two planes of existence, Material and Spectral. Naturally, he's most comfortable in the Spectral realm, where he can freely run around for as long as he likes. In his Spectral form, Raziel can easily walk around underwater as if there was no water there at all, and can pass through some physical objects like gates. It's not all good news though, because in the Spectral realm he has no way of manipulating physical objects, meaning there are times where he has to pass to the Material realm in order to open doors, move stone blocks and the like.

FACT

There was a wealth of content cut from the game, including extra powers for Raziel, a third and final battle with Kain and an expanded spell system. This is partly why the game ends on a cliffhanger.

The Legacy of Kain series would eventually go on to consist of five titles (at the time of writing), of which Soul Reaver was the second. It's generally agreed among fans of the series that it's the best of the bunch, and the Dreamcast port is considered the best version due to its improved frame rate and improved character models. ■

LOONEY TUNES: SPACE RACE

Year 2000
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Infogrames Melbourne House

GIVEN THAT THE huge success of Super Mario Kart led to an onslaught of character-themed karting games throughout the rest of the '90s (and beyond), it was only a matter of time before one of the most well-loved animated ensembles, Looney Tunes, would get a karting game of its own. Looney Tunes Space Race has a basic plot, though the fact it has a plot at all is more than most karting games can muster: the ACME Corporation, the company that makes all the gadgets and gizmos in the Looney Tunes universe, has decided to sponsor the prestigious Looney Tunes Space Race. Not only will the winner get the flame and glory that winning the series would usually grant them, but they'll also get a lifetime supply of ACME products. And when most of your life involves blowing people up with comedy contraptions, that's one of the greatest prizes imaginable. Despite this, only a relatively small number of Looney Tunes characters have stepped up to take part. There are only six characters to choose from at the start of the game – Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, Sylvester, Yosemite Sam and Wile E. Coyote – while Porky Pig and Marvin the Martian can be unlocked through gameplay. Given the Space Race title, the tracks are based in various worlds of the Looney Tunes galaxy, including Offworld City (a 1950s version of a future metropolis), Planet ACME and the Pyramids of Mars. With its impressive animation it's a better karting game than it gets credit for, its small roster notwithstanding. ■

FACT

The game was ported to PS2 a couple of years later, though it was simply named Space Race and had a different soundtrack.

MAG FORCE RACING

Year 2000
Publisher Crave Entertainment
Developer VCC Entertainment

WITH NO DREAMCAST ports of Wipeout or Extreme G, players would have to turn to other developers for their futuristic racing needs. One title attempting to fill the gap was MagForce Racing, known on other formats as Killer Loop. The game is set in a future where gasoline supplies have run out and all the world's gas-guzzling cars have been replaced: not with electric cars, but with far more expensive-sounding magneto-kinetic cars (which have also required every road to be replaced with metallic surfaces). As the name suggests, these cars use magnets to pull themselves along the track, which can lead to extreme speeds but also more elaborate tracks with things like corkscrews. Some parts of each track involve racing upside-down, then, which can take their toll on your car's magnet. The magnet capacity needs to be continually topped up, because if you're racing on a wall and the magnet runs out your car starts using its emergency power instead, which slows you down. At first there are only five tracks to choose from – Moscow, Mars, Hawaii, the Himalayas and Osaka – but as you win these races you unlock higher classes of vehicle, and in turn gain access to new courses in the likes of a space station and a holographic training facility in Hamburg. Weapons are typical fare (missiles, mines, a laser beam) but by collecting multiple power-ups without using your weapon they can be upgraded: your laser can reflect off walls, for example, and can be upgraded again to a homing laser. ■

FACT

Crave Entertainment tried to sneakily give magazines an angle in its press release for the game, suggesting it was the perfect answer to real-life rising gas prices.

MAKEN X

Year 1999
Publisher Atlus
Developer Atlus

AN INTERESTING CROSS between a hack-and-slash game and a first-person shooter, Maken X was the directorial debut of Katsura Hashino, who would go on to direct and produce numerous games in the Megami Tensei and Persona series for Atlus. The game takes place 'five minutes' in the future, where there's tension between the US and China, and the European Union is threatening to collapse. While all this is going on, a research institute in Japan creates the Maken, an artificial intelligence (made into the form of a sword) which has the ability to take over people's bodies. When the lab is attacked and its lead scientist kidnapped, his daughter Kay decides to wield Maken, tying her mind to it, and heads off to rescue him.

Gameplay is a first-person affair, where you lock onto enemies as you approach them and swipe, block and dodge their attacks. If you're able to attack them from behind you'll score a critical hit, so the game also lets you dramatically leap over an opponent's head and land behind them so you can quickly slash their back. Its unconventional viewpoint aside, the game's other main gimmick is the ability to 'brainjack' certain characters and take over their bodies instead, with Maken changing its shape into a weapon that best suits that character. Despite its unusual nature, Maken X is perhaps one of Atlus's least well-known western releases, and while it's a bit all over the place in terms of plot it's still a unique title that may require a second (or indeed first) look. ■

FACT

The game was given an enhanced PS2 remake called Maken Shao: Demon Sword, which ditched the first-person viewpoint for a more straightforward third-person camera.

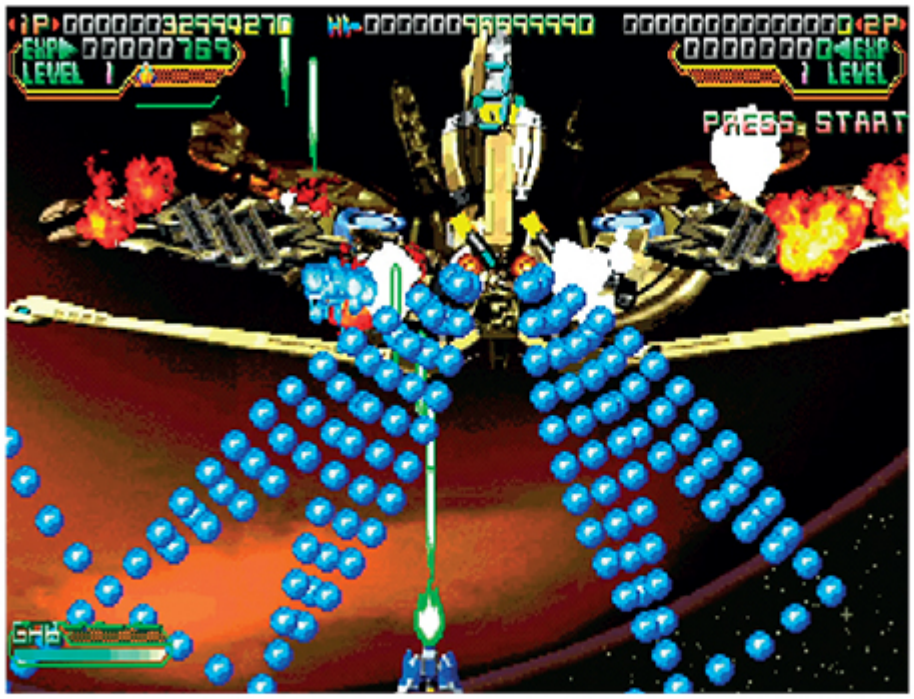
MARS MATRIX

Year 2000
Publisher Capcom
Developer Takumi Corporation

KNOWN BY ITS full name Mars Matrix: Hyper Solid Shooting in Japan, this was another Capcom collaboration with the shoot 'em up specialists at Takumi Corporation: see Giga Wing, which had been released earlier. Like that game, Mars Matrix is a 'vertizontal' shoot 'em up, in that it's a vertically-scrolling shooter that still uses a normal wide aspect ratio (as opposed to a taller screen). The story takes place in 2309, some 50 years after humans successfully colonised Mars. The colonists have become annoyed that Mars is still being governed by Earth, so without warning they send a transmission to Earth saying 'we declare our independence', and break all contact with the planet. So begins the Mars War of Independence, where Earth sends its new fighter ship, the Mosquito, to take out the colonists' defences: that'll teach them for wanting to self-govern. Um, or something. There are two types of Mosquito to choose from: a slower and weaker one with a wide shot, or a faster one with a powerful but narrow laser. Mars Matrix's main gimmick, however, is the Absorption Barrier, a special force field that can be activated when you hold down the shot button. Appearing for a few seconds, this attracts enemy bullets which can then be fired back at the enemy, meaning if players can perfectly time the right moment to activate the Barrier (usually during the most bullet-hell moments in boss battles) they can unleash a heavy dose of the enemy's own medicine back at them. ■

FACT

In the arcade version, the player's score couldn't go higher than 999,999,999,990. This was fixed in the Dreamcast version by adding an extra two digits.



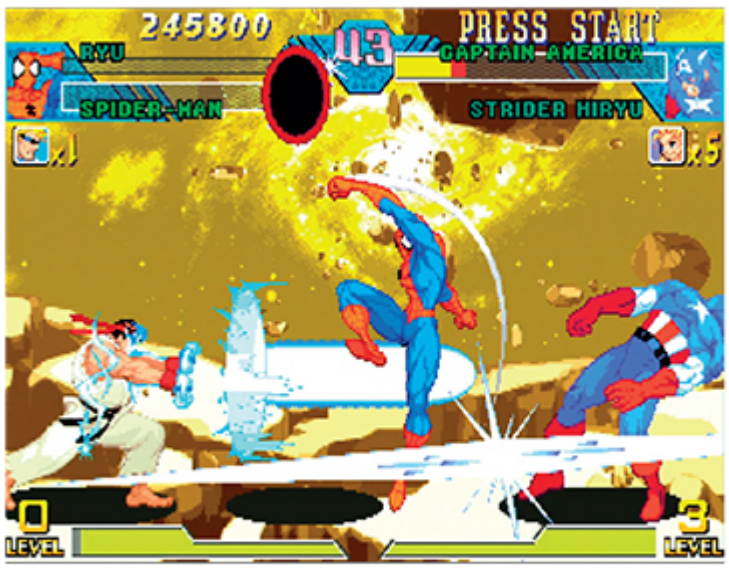
MARVEL VS CAPCOM: CLASH OF SUPER HEROES

Year	1999
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

IN 1996, AS the Street Fighter Alpha series was doing the rounds, Capcom surprised everyone by releasing X-Men vs Street Fighter, a superb crossover game which borrowed heavily from its previous Marvel fighting games, X-Men: Children of the Atom and Marvel Super Heroes. The success of X-Men vs Street Fighter convinced Capcom to widen the roster and release a sequel the following year, the even better Marvel Super Heroes vs Street Fighter. Of course, however, Street Fighter is only one part of Capcom's rich history, so for its third game in its crossover series Capcom decided to throw the gates wide open to all of its IP, and released the iconic Marvel vs Capcom.

The game features a total of 15 characters: eight from Capcom and seven from Marvel (though the unplayable final boss is Marvel super villain Onslaught, technically bringing the roster to an even 8-8). On the Capcom side are three Street Fighter characters – Ryu, Chun-Li and Zangief – as well as Mega Man, Strider, Captain Commando, Morrigan from Darkstalkers and Jin from Cyberbots: Full Metal Madness. Meanwhile, flying the flag for Marvel are Spider-Man, Wolverine, Captain America, Venom, Hulk, Gambit and War Machine (apparently all the Marvel women were busy that day).

Whereas Capcom's separate Street Fighter and Marvel titles were strictly one-on-one affairs, Marvel vs Capcom is similar to its two predecessors in that it focuses instead on tag team combat. Players choose two characters – it can be two Capcom, two Marvel or one from each side – and can freely swap between them during the fight. Switching characters is recommended because when a character who's taken damage is swapped out they can recover a small section of health as they sit on the sidelines.



Spectacle is the name of the game here, and elaborate tag-team moves can be performed fairly easily. By simply hitting the Heavy Punch and Heavy Kick buttons at the same time, your partner will jump in with a flying kick and you'll then control them. However, if your super meter has been filled enough, by performing a simple fireball motion and hitting both buttons you'll trigger a screen-filling Variable Combination move, in which both your characters perform their powerful Hyper Combo moves together, potentially doing untold damage.

As if such tomfoolery wasn't enough, the game also has a secondary roster of 20 support characters, one of which is chosen at random for you every time you battle. By pressing the Medium Punch and Medium Kick buttons together, this support character will hop in, perform a special move and hop out again. Not only does this make for more unbridled chaos, it also gives more characters a chance to make an appearance: the likes of Thor, Cyclops, Magneto, Storm and Juggernaut from the Marvel side can potentially be support characters, as can such Capcom characters as Arthur from Ghouls 'n Ghosts, Anita from Vampire Hunter and the unnamed soldier from shoot 'em up Forgotten Worlds. Marvel vs Capcom was just chaos, and surely had no way of getting even crazier. Anyway, let's see what's over the page. ■

FACT

According to Capcom, the series came about because Marvel wanted to introduce its characters to more people in Japan.

MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

THINGS GOT CRAZIER a year later when Capcom released a successor to Marvel vs Capcom which outdid its predecessor on virtually every front. The initial character roster is noticeably larger than that of the first game – 24 compared to 15 – but by playing though the game players can earn in-game currency which can then be spent in a shop to unlock more fighters, eventually bringing the total roster to a jaw-dropping 56, nearly four times as big as the first Marvel vs Capcom.

New entrants in the Marvel side are mainly X-Men heavy, including the likes of Cyclops, Juggernaut, Magneto, Rogue, Sabretooth and Storm. There are some other non-mutant debutants fighting the good fight for Team Marvel, however, such as Thanos, Doctor Doom and Blackheart (though given that those three are villains, maybe 'fighting the good fight' is the wrong choice of words). Oh, and Iron Man's in there now, which is nice. Meanwhile, Capcom's line-up is bolstered by more Street Fighter characters: step forward, Akuma, Cammy, Guile, Dhalsim, Ken, M Bison and Sakura. Other non-Street Fighter newcomers include Jill Valentine from Resident Evil (who can spawn zombies and killer crows), Felicia and BB Hood from Darkstalkers, Hayato from Star Gladiator and Tron Bonne, Roll and a Serbot from the Mega Man series.

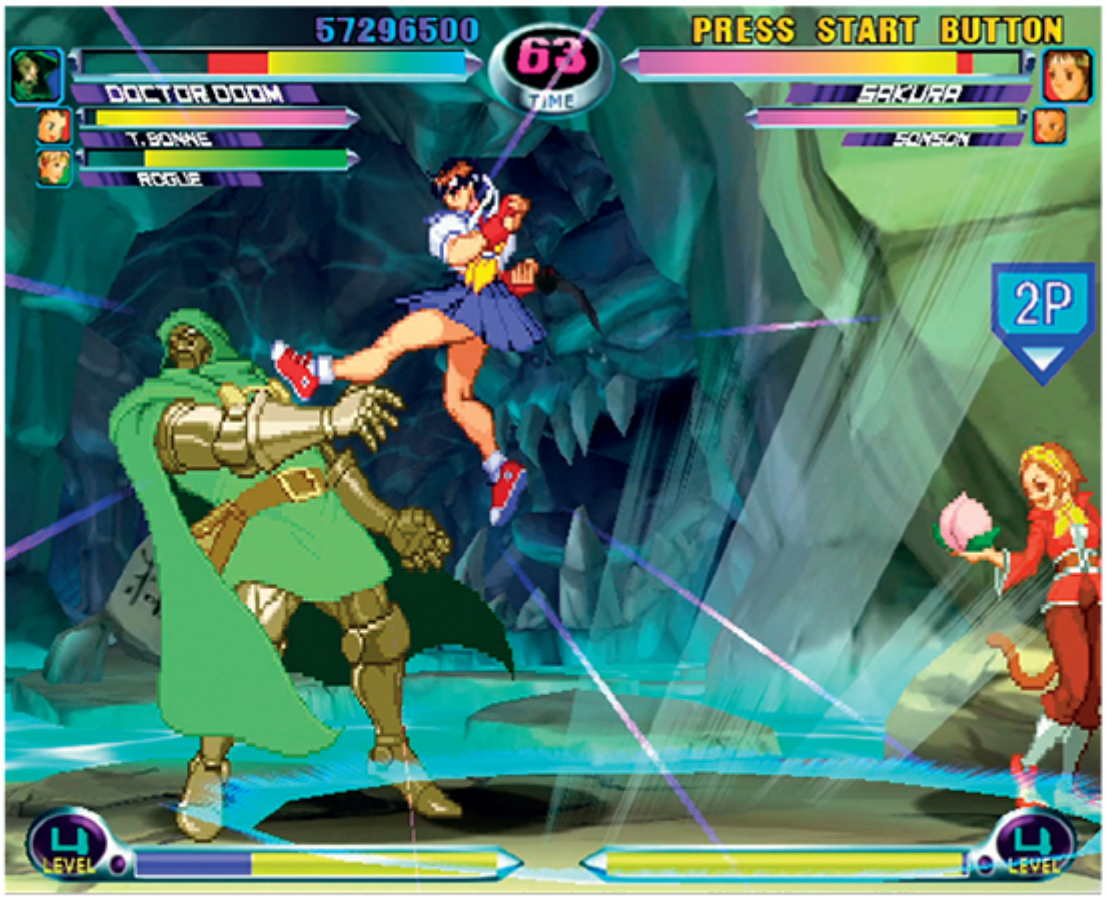
Somewhat oddly for a game whose main premise is the bringing together of characters from two popular companies, Marvel vs Capcom 2 also includes three

completely original fighters: a French pirate lady called Ruby Heart, a monkey girl called SonSon (who's the granddaughter of the protagonist from Capcom's 1984 arcade game of the same name) and a frankly bizarre anthropomorphic Mexican cactus called Amingo, who's apparently a member of a race known as the Man-Plants and is on a mission to find out why all plant life on Earth is dying. The final boss, a black orb called Abyss which is capable of transforming into different forms, is also an entirely new creation.

FACT

It's near-impossible to unlock every character now in the Japanese version. It has three currencies earned through gameplay, online matches and plugging your VMU into the Japanese arcade version. The western version only has one currency.

In terms of the actual combat, the main difference in the second game is the decision to switch from 2v2 to 3v3 combat, allowing players to pick their favourite team of three and giving them a little more choice when swapping out characters mid-fight. The move to three-fighter teams, however, comes at the loss of the 'support character' system from the first game, meaning those extra cameos are no longer to be found. Instead, the game now has two Assist buttons, which can be pressed to make one of your two teammates jump in, perform an attack then hop out again. The Assist buttons also mean the standard Street Fighter 6-button control scheme has also been ditched in flavour of a simpler 4-button one, with players only armed with light and heavy punches and kicks (though Capcom does get around this by letting you chain two light attacks, of which the second is usually a medium attack). All the changes make for a much bigger game, and if you only want one MvC game on Dreamcast it should probably be this one. ■



MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX

Year 2001
Publisher Activision
Developer Runecraft

AS YOU'LL HAVE seen earlier in the book, Acclaim decided to jump on the extreme sports craze that was kicked off by Activision's hugely successful Tony Hawk series by launching its own extreme sports label, and hiring Dave Mirra to make a BMX game. Turns out Activision had its own sights set on the bike market, releasing its own BMX title named after vert ramp legend Mat Hoffman (it was much later, though: it was set for release in fall 2000 but an apparent delay saw it launching eight months after the Mirra game). As you'd expect from an Activision game, Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX plays even more like Tony Hawk's Pro Skater than Acclaim's effort did, giving players a series of stages that each included five goals to tick off. In true Tony Hawk style, these usually involved hitting two score targets, collecting 5 of something, finding a hidden item and some other random task. By completing enough missions, the next stage would be unlocked. Gameplay is obviously similar to that of Tony Hawk, with grinds, jumps, flips and hold tricks all mapped to the same buttons. With a bike, though, there's the added complication of facing backwards when landing from a jump. While this isn't an issue with a skateboard because you're always standing sideways whatever way the board lands, with a bike you can find yourself facing the wrong way if you don't complete a full spin from a half-pipe jump, resulting in the need for an awkward little 180-degree hop to face the right direction again. ■

FACT

Being sure to appeal to the Tony Hawk fans, Activision added Hawk as a hidden character, as well as recreations of two Pro Skater stages, the Warehouse and Burnside.

MAX STEEL: COVERT MISSIONS

Year 2001
Publisher Mattel Interactive
Developer Treyarch

MAX STEEL WAS a turn-of-the-millennium attempt by Mattel to recapture the days of Hasbro's GI Joe craze with a new line of 12-inch action figures that were to be accompanied by an animated TV series. Watch the show, buy the toys, you know the drill. This video game spin-off designed to further boost the IP was developed by Treyarch, but this was a time before the developer nailed the third-person action formula with the *Spider-Man* movie games and as such the reception was tepid. The game follows Max as he tries to rescue his surrogate father Jefferson Smith, who's been kidnapped by evil D.R.E.A.D. agents. After successfully getting his old man back, Max doesn't realise he's been tricked: he's actually rescued an evil clone of his dad created by D.R.E.A.D., who then starts giving Max missions that will actually make D.R.E.A.D.'s plans of world domination easier. Will Max realise his dad's a dud and that the real Jefferson Smith is still being held captive? It's a fun plot, to give it credit. Ultimately, though, the game itself is a straightforward third-person action adventure game where Max takes on seven separate missions set in the likes of a junkyard, a dockside, a research tower, an underwater base and a jungle. Nothing groundbreaking, then, but while the PlayStation had countless TV show tie-ins, Max Steel does at least stand as one of the few to get a Dreamcast port. ■

FACT

The *Max Steel* cartoon was scrapped in the US after three seasons, but Latin America loved it so a series of short cartoons was released there to continue promoting new toy releases.

MAXIMUM POOL

Year	2000
Publisher	Sierra Sports
Developer	Dynamix

DON'T GET TOO excited by the title: it turns out that the maximum amount of pool you can have in this game is a table's worth, so pretty much the same as in any other pool game. Maximum Pool is part of Sierra's 3D Ultra series of sports games, which started with 3D Ultra Pinball in 1995 and went on to incorporate the likes of mini golf, RC racing and, of course, pool. As the second and final pool game in the series (after PC game 3D Ultra Cool Pool), this offers seven variations on the sport: basic pocket billiards, carom billiards, cutthroat, 8-ball, 9-ball, rotation and snooker. The game's main selling point was the ability to connect online and play against other human opponents, and given that there was no need for instant reactions it was the perfect game for the Dreamcast's humble 56kB/s modem. If you don't fancy going online (not that you have much choice these days), there's also a selection of five AI opponents, whose reactions appear as small video clips as you play. They include college junior Amy, 'hot-headed business manager' Brad, 'struggling writer' Jim, advertising agency exec Linda and Buddy, who's a dog. Yes, really. Defeating each AI player on a high difficulty level unlocks odd-shaped pool tables, including a triangular one, an X-shaped one and one shaped like a poker table, just in case the ability to play against an actual canine wasn't a big enough hint that this isn't an entirely strait-laced title. ■

FACT

This is only one of two 3D Ultra games (of around 20) released on something other than PC. The other was 3D Ultra Pinball: Thrillride on Game Boy Color.

MDK2

Year	2000
Publisher	Interplay
Developer	BioWare

THE ORIGINAL MDK was developed by Shiny Entertainment, fresh off its success with the Earthworm Jim games. It was such a critical and commercial success that publisher Interplay approached Shiny and asked if it fancied making a sequel, but the game's creator Nick Bruty had already moved on to other projects. Interplay handed the sequel to BioWare, a then-new studio which had only released one game and was still working on what would become its breakthrough title, Baldur's Gate. MDK2 starts right after the events of the first game, and has protagonist Kurt Hectic being imprisoned by a huge alien, who then also captures Kurt's friend, robotic dog Max. It's up to Kurt to escape and rescue Max, all the while trying to stay in touch with their professor chum Dr Hawkins who's on their ship. Over the course of the game the player gets to control all three characters, each of whom plays differently. Kurt's abilities are similar to those in the first MDK, with his trademark ribbon parachute allowing him to glide around and his sniper gun letting him take out distant enemies. Max is more focused on all-out firepower, while Dr Hawkins' stages are more puzzle-platformer focused, and tend to be about collecting and combining objects. Ultimately, the game would be released to widespread critical success, with BioWare praised for managing to replicate the combination of style and humour that made the first game so well-loved. ■

FACT

The decision to add two more playable characters came when they were being animated for CG cutscenes. 'Why don't we just allow the player to control them,' BioWare co-founder Greg Zeschuk said.

METROPOLIS STREET RACER

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Bizarre Creations

WHEN SEGA DECIDED it wanted a new cutting-edge racing game for the Dreamcast, it was agreed that it wanted to hire whoever had developed Psygnosis' F1 games on the PlayStation. Turned out this was Liverpool-based Bizarre Creations, and the subsequent deal would result in Metropolis Street Racer, one of the most groundbreaking racing titles at the time, and the beginning of what would eventually become a much loved series on a different system.

The main selling point of Metropolis Street Racer, as per its title, is its dedication to real-world locations. Until that point, any time a real city was featured in a racing game it was usually in the form of a compromised interpretation with landmarks dumped in random places: a New York track, for example, would always have the Statue of Liberty in there, but it might be round the corner from Times Square. Metropolis Street Racer, on the other hand, opted for fully accurate recreations of its three cities – London, San Francisco and Tokyo – with staff travelling to each city and taking tens of thousands of reference photos to rebuild them in the game. The resulting 1.5 square miles of each city was so impressive at the time that some magazines would publish side-by-side photos next to their real-world equivalents to show how authentic they were.

Its realistic cities inside, MSR also turned heads with its actual racing gameplay. Rather than simply tasking players with finishing in first place, the game incorporated a 'Kudos' system which rewarded players not only for performing the tasks set for them, but also going above and beyond. For each event type – be that a time trial, street race, overtake challenge, multi-race championship or what have you – players had the option to set their own target time or position, with more Kudos available for those who set the objective higher then pulled it off. Kudos were also awarded for stylish driving: drifts would earn you more, while bumping into walls would inevitably result in you losing some.

FACT

The radio stations have ads too. The London ones, for example, include a comedy ad for the drink Diet Tango, as well as an ad for Planet Perfecto's single 'Bullet in the Gun' (which isn't actually in the game's soundtrack).

The racing was accompanied by a selection of fake radio stations put together by regular Sega collaborator Richard Jacques. Each city has three stations, each with their own music, and unlike in most racing games the range of genres is rather wide, lending the game an eclectic sound that may have turned some people off but is undoubtedly characteristic of the game. From the cheesy country music and pop songs that play during the San Francisco stage to the soft jazz and drum 'n' bass music of the London stages, Jacques' soundtrack covers all the bases. A Jacques of all trades, if you will.

All this combined to make Metropolis Street Racer of one of the most iconic racing games of its era, and when the Dreamcast's all-too brief life ended Bizarre Creations would jump ship to Microsoft to create the Project Gotham Racing series for Xbox, of which Metropolis Street Racer was quite clearly the first entry: if not officially, then spiritually. ■

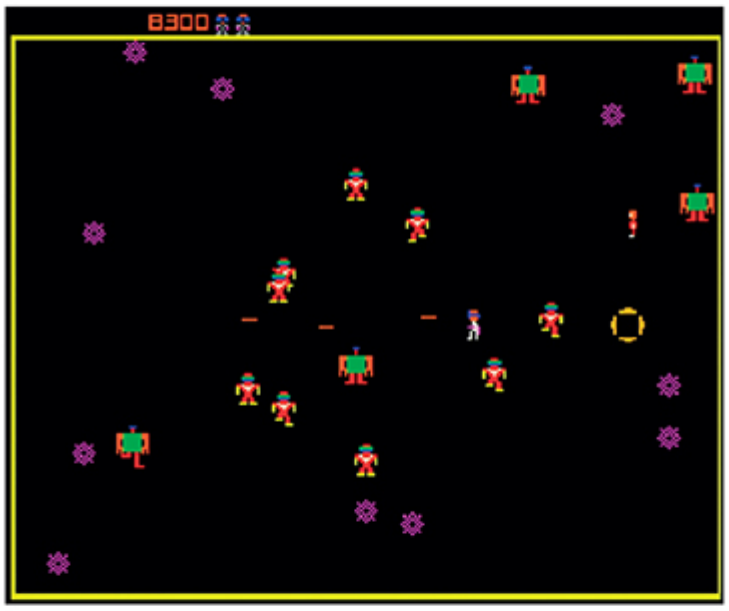
MIDWAY'S GREATEST HITS VOL 1

Year	2000
Publisher	Midway Games
Developer	Digital Eclipse

IN 1996, MIDWAY and retro specialist Digital Eclipse released Arcade's Greatest Hits on the Sega Saturn, which contained six classic arcade games originally released in the early '80s by Williams (who would later acquire Midway). This Dreamcast title is essentially the same compilation, but with a curious mix of pros and cons. The six games on offer are mostly bonafide vintage classics: there's screen-wrapping side-scrolling shoot 'em up Defender (1980), its sequel Stargate (1981), renamed here as Defender II, creepy voice-enhanced shooter Sinistar (1982), flap 'em up Joust (1982), twin-stick groundbreaker Robotron 2084 (1982) and the underrated kitchen sink cleaning game Bubbles (1982), where you play as a soap bubble and have to gather all the dirt to grow as big as possible. Since some of these games played with a different resolution to home displays – Sinistar in particular was wildly different with its vertical display – the game lets you freely stretch and move the screen around to find an aspect ratio that best suits your tastes. The emulation is generally better than that of the Saturn version, then, but it disappointingly doesn't have any of its extra features like behind-the-scenes videos and artwork, meaning the package is little more than six old arcade games and nothing else. It's one of those rare situations, then, where even though the emulation in the Saturn version is of slightly poorer quality, the general collection is better on the previous-gen system due to the bewildering lack of bonus content on the Dreamcast. ■

FACT

Robotron's twin-stick controls were created because its creator Eugene Jarvis injured his hand. While it was in a cast he couldn't press fire buttons, so he made a second stick.



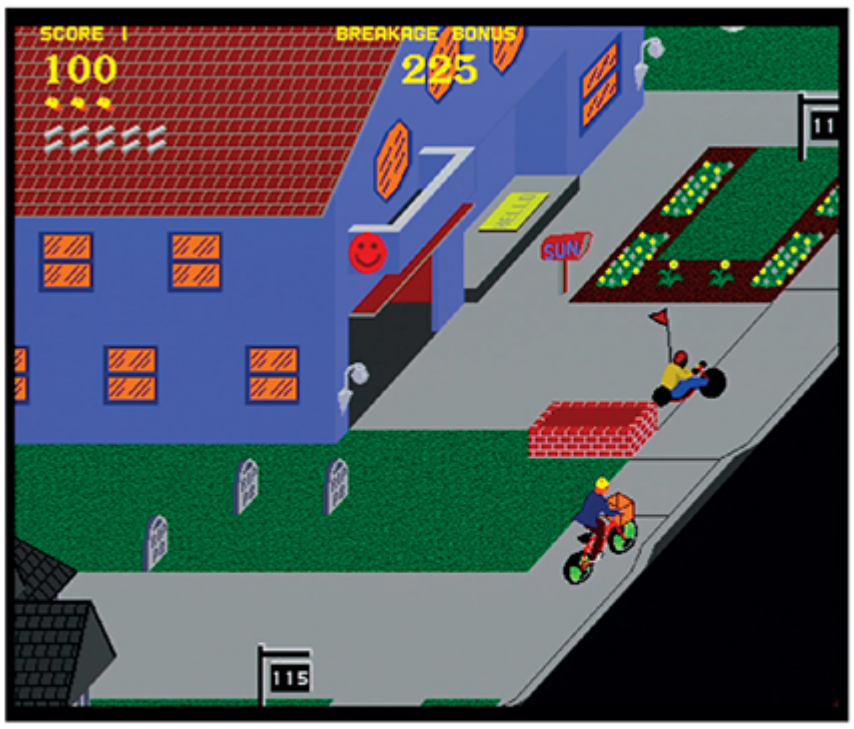
MIDWAY'S GREATEST HITS VOL 2

Year	2001
Publisher	Midway Games
Developer	Digital Eclipse

WHILE THE SIX games included in the first edition of Midway's Greatest Arcade Hits were mostly classics, it's still fair to say they were quite dated (even for the year 2000). The second volume, released the following year, is arguably a more approachable compilation these days because the six games it boasts were released later in the 1980s, offering more detailed graphics and a little more character. This time players can take to the streets with their skateboards in 720° (1986), travel across a side-scrolling lunar surface in Moon Patrol (1982), fight their way through creature-infested dungeons in Gauntlet (1985), provide their neighbours with their daily news in Paperboy (1984), drive at high speeds along needlessly dangerous roads in Spy Hunter (1983) and wreck skyscrapers with reckless abandon in Rampage (1986). As in the first game, players are given access to an options menu for each game that basically imitates the dip switches from the arcade board (allowing them to set difficulty, number of lives and the like), but the option to stretch the screen is no longer available, meaning players are stuck with a black border around the action. Volume 2 also shares its predecessor's most disappointing aspect, in that there's still a lack of any bonus content to speak of. A third volume was planned for November 2000, according to a release schedule in an issue of US magazine *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, but it never saw the light of day and the games due to be included were never announced. ■

FACT

The arcade version of Paperboy was controlled with a literal set of handlebars attached to the cabinet, with a button on each end.



MOHO

Year 2000
Publisher Take-Two Interactive
Developer Lost Toys

WHAT DO YOU get if you cross The Running Man with Robot Wars? If you guessed MoHo then congratulations, you figured out how the intro was going to go. This action game – which has the distinction of being the only Dreamcast game released exclusively in the United Kingdom, and is therefore one of the more expensive western releases on the system – takes place on Alpha Prime, a maximum security prison planet where synthetic life forms are sent if they're naughty sods. They aren't just there to while away the hours until they're free, though: on Alpha Prime, convicts are expected to go through an 'induction process' (where their legs are removed and replaced with a single rolling ball), then take part in a series of gladiatorial conflicts to fight for their survival. Once you've picked your character from the five available (from the pony-tailed assassin robot Angel to the distinctly Soul Reaver-like Apostle), you're thrown in the game's first chapter, Eco Prison, where you have to take on four events with different rules: finish first in a race, collect tokens within a certain time, kill every other robot in the arena, that sort of thing. Once these are completed, you move to a different prison with more events, and once you've cleared all ten prisons, including the exceptionally dangerous Alpha Star Complex, the game is over. MoHo is a perfectly entertaining game, but it's worth noting that the fact it was only released in a single PAL region means it can now sell for many hundreds of pounds, at least. ■

FACT

MoHo was released on the PlayStation in North America under the slightly less cryptic title of Ball Breakers.

MONACO GRAND PRIX

Year 1999
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Paris

THIS GAME'S GOT more titles than John Cena had during his WWE run, but whether you know it as Monaco Grand Prix (its US title), Racing Simulation: Monaco Grand Prix (UK), Racing Simulation 2 (Germany), Monaco Grand Prix: Racing Simulation 2 (the rest of Europe) or Duncan's Drivefest (a name I just made up), it's still the same game once it's booted up. Although it's an F1 racing game, it doesn't have the official Formula 1 licence, meaning none of the driver or manufacturer names are accurate and the various track advertisements are either removed or heavily modified. Still, at least the tracks are still accurate enough recreations of the 17 real-life circuits used during the F1 calendar at the time (minus all branding, of course) and there's still the option to play through a full championship with practice and qualification runs. Players who can't be bothered with such formality may wish instead to play the game's Arcade mode, which presents players with a timer and checkpoints as they race. Finally, an interesting Retro mode is available, where you get to race as one of four cars from the 1950s: while this is a limited mode with only one-off races available, it's at least something different from the typical F1 fare at the time. And if the lack of the F1 licence is off-putting, the game has an Edit mode which lets you change the fictional driver and team names to something different (like, oh I don't know, the real names). ■

FACT

The reason it's known as Racing Simulation 2 in some regions is because it's the sequel to F1 Racing Simulation, a PC-only racing game that did actually have the official F1 licence.

MORTAL KOMBAT GOLD

Year 1999
Publisher Midway Games
Developer Eurocom

AFTER TAKING THE fighting game world by storm with the first three Mortal Kombat titles, Midway decided to take the series polygonal for the first time with the release of Mortal Kombat 4 in arcades. Following ports for the Nintendo 64, PlayStation and PC, it was decided that the Dreamcast would get its own special port, ready in time for the console's launch, with the new title Mortal Kombat Gold. At its core Gold is the same as Mortal Kombat 4 but it has a number of additions. Six characters from previous Mortal Kombat games who had missed out on being in the MK4 roster – Baraka, Cyrax, Kitana, Kung Lao, Mileena and Sektor – were added to Gold, bringing them to the polygonal era for the first time. Three new stages were also included – The Church, Netherrealm and Soul Chamber – while players now had the ability to select weapons while fighting. Unfortunately the game was plagued with bugs and issues at launch (including the inability to save), and Mortal Kombat Gold was met with heavy criticism as a result. If you still want to play it, try to get the North American re-release, because this fixed a lot of the bugs and was a much more stable game as a result. You can tell the difference because the re-release has a green sticker on the box saying 'Hot! New!' and the disc is coloured red, as opposed to the gold launch disc. ■

FACT

A new character called Belokk was created by Eurocom but wasn't added to the game in time for release. That didn't stop it accidentally releasing screenshots of him, which were published in *Game Informer*.

MR DRILLER

Year 2000
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco

SOMETIMES THE SIMPLEST games are the most effective, and Mr Driller is a shining example of this. Originally released in arcades in 1999, this Dreamcast port is faithful to the coin-op version but adds a couple of new modes. Playing as a chap called Susumu Hori, the aim is to simply drill down to reach the bottom of a well by pointing your drill at coloured blocks and pressing a button to make them disappear. When you drill a block, any other blocks of the same colour that are attached to it will also disappear, meaning if a large number of blocks are joined you could potentially remove a lot of the playing field with a single action. The problem is that when a block is removed, any blocks above it that were being supported by it will fall downwards until they either hit the floor or connect to a block of the same colour. In this way, the player can potentially create an accidental cascade of falling blocks that could land on Susumu's head, killing him. To make matters worse, Susumu only has a limited air supply, so he has to keep collecting air capsules along the way. The Dreamcast version adds two new modes: Survival gives the player only one life and tasks them with getting as far as possible, while Time Attack gives the player an impossibly short time limit to reach the end and replaces air capsules with clocks that will add seconds to the timer. ■

FACT

Mr Driller creator Yasuhito Nagaoka was inspired by a Japanese children's game in which a piece of wood is placed on sand and players have to carve the sand without making the wood fall.

MS PAC-MAN MAZE MADNESS

Year 2000
Publisher Namco
Developer Mass Media

MS PAC-MAN IS in a bit of a tight spot. Someone has invaded the enchanted castle of Pac-Land and turned it into a ghost-filled haunted house, and on top of that the Princess has gone missing. It's about to get worse, too: according to Professor Pac, this nasty new invader is planning to use dark magic to attack the four Wonders of Pac-Land and steal the four Gems of Virtue: Generosity, Truth, Wisdom and Courage. It's up to Ms Pac-Man to use the Prof's special Pactrometer device, which allows her to enter each of the four Wonders and secure the Gems to make sure they don't fall into the wrong hands. Oh, and the Professor's just been kidnapped by ghosts too, because why not at this point. Maze Madness is a 3D adventure game which still holds true to the original Pac-Man (or rather, Ms Pac-Man) formula. Each of the four Wonders – the Egyptian themed Cleopactra, the icy Crystal Caves, the Chinese themed Pac-Ping Harbor and the ghost-heavy Haunted Halloween – has a series of stages which look like overblown versions of typical Pac-Man mazes. The aim in each of these areas is to eat enough Pac-Dots in each maze to gain access to the next section, all while of course avoiding ghosts (and other enemies in this case). As ever, Ms Pac-Man can still collect Power Pellets to turn enemies blue, allowing her to eat them. The result is an interesting game that, while clearly spruced up, doesn't stray too far from its predecessor's principles. ■

FACT

Due to a royalties dispute with retro company AtGames, Bandai Namco started removing Ms Pac-Man from retro re-releases in 2022, replacing her with a new character called Pac-Mom.

MTV SPORTS SKATEBOARDING FEATURING ANDY MACDONALD

Year 2000
Publisher THQ
Developer Darkblack

WITH TONY HAWK firmly cementing skateboarding as something that was officially 'cool' among America's youth again, it's no surprise that MTV – which aimed to be the barometer of what was cool – decided to get in on the action with its own Tony Hawk rival. MTV Sports Skateboarding signed up 14 pro skateboarders, from the title star Andy Macdonald to the likes of Danny Way, Colin McKayt, Rob Dyrdek and Heidi Fitzgerald, in an attempt to rival Mr Hawk and chums. On paper, it was a strong proposition too: the game features an impressive total of 27 stages once everything's unlocked: skate parks naturally make up the lion's share of these, but the more interesting locations include a castle, a mall, a Sea Life Center, the streets of San Francisco and even more ridiculous ones like the Moon and Hell. The Tony Hawk games were also notable for their fantastic soundtracks, so MTV – with its obvious connections to the music industry – was also able to put together a fairly rocking playlist with tracks from the likes of Cypress Hill, Pennywise, Deftones, System of a Down and Goldfinger (they even got the rather appropriate Heaven is a Halfpipe from OPM in there). Where it all unfortunately fell apart was in the most crucial area, the gameplay, with most critics slating it for being far too stiff and frustrating to play. Most damning was the US *Official Dreamcast Magazine*, which stated: 'If Andy Macdonald plays games, we bet he plays Tony Hawk.' ■

FACT

A further three MTV Sports were released on PlayStation: TJ Lavin's Ultimate BMX, Snowboarding and Pure Ride (which was another snowboarding game).

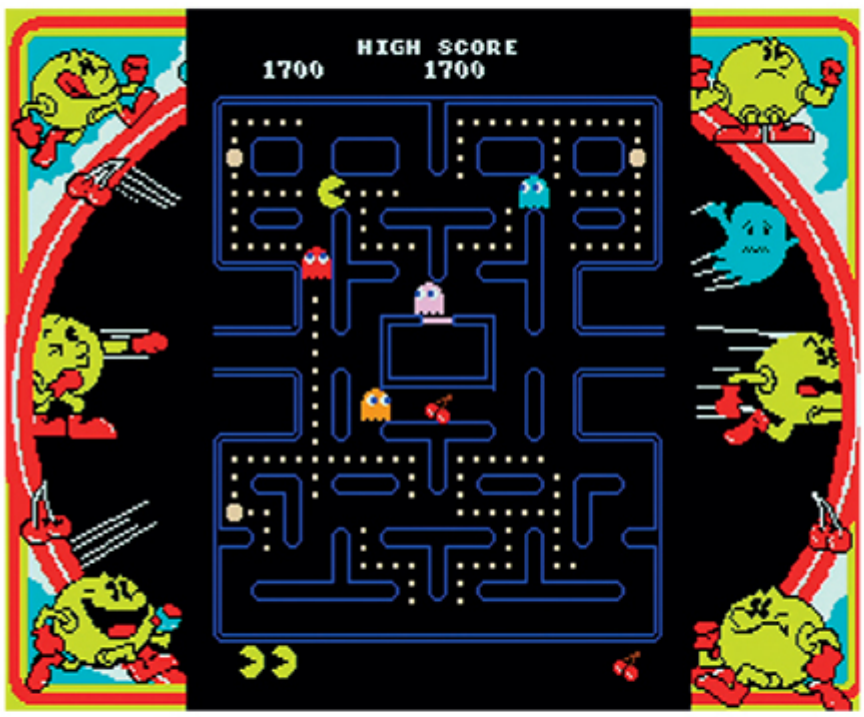
NAMCO MUSEUM

Year 2000
Publisher Namco
Developer Mass Media

NAMCO HAS RELEASED more retro compilations of its games over the years than Pac-Man has had hot ghost dinners, but Namco Museum is the only multi-game compilation the publisher ever released on a Sega console. It's essentially the same as Namco Museum 64, which was released at the same time on the Nintendo 64, in that it bundles together six classic Namco arcade games but does so without any of the bells and whistles included in the previous five Namco Museum games released on the PlayStation. The quality of the six games featured here isn't in question: Pac-Man and Ms Pac-Man speak for themselves, while Galaga and Galaxian are seminal early examples of the shoot 'em up genre, and Pole Position and Dig Dug bring some extra variety to round off the package. Emulation is solid, and each game has a range of options similar to the dip switches on the original arcade boards. That said, however, the resulting package is still fairly barebones, especially given the proper first-person Museum sections featured in the PlayStation collections. The Dreamcast version does at least have one little bonus in the shape of a very basic mini-game called PACit, which can be copied to the VMU and played on the move. This puts Pac-Man on the left side of the screen, and the player moves him up and down to collect dots as they move towards him. A nice touch, but it's probably not worth running out to get new batteries for your VMU. ■

FACT

Pole Position was so popular when it was released in 1982 that it ended up getting its own Saturday morning cartoon show (though it only lasted for 13 episodes).



NBA 2K

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Visual Concepts

ALTHOUGH THESE DAYS the long-running NBA 2K series is handled by 2K Sports, it was initially created by Sega as part of its Sega Sports label. The first game in the series, NBA 2K, was released just weeks before the turn of the millennium and was quickly heralded as a new dawn for basketball video games. Developed by Visual Concepts – which has continued to be responsible for the series for the decades that have followed – the game gained praise for what was at the time an unprecedented level of character detail, running at a smooth 60 frames per second. The official NBA licence allows all the team and player names to be authentic, and the play-by-play commentary by the fictional pair of Bob Steele and Rod West – played by Bob Fitzgerald and Rod Brooks, the hosts of sports show 'Fitz & Brooks' on San Francisco radio station KNBR – was noted for being more realistically conversational than most of the commentary in previous sports games. Naturally, the game has all the modes you would expect from a basketball title of its era: as well as the option to play an Exhibition match you can also take part in a season lasting 14, 28, 56 or the full 82 games. You can also create your own player and trade him to your team of choice, but if you actively hate every NBA team in existence then you can even create your own team, right down to choosing a logo. Though when one of these is a picture of Sonic playing basketball, there isn't really a choice to be made. ■

FACT

There are three hidden teams in the game consisting of three development groups: Visual Concepts, Sega and Sega Sports. The code DEVDUDES unlocks them.

NBA 2K1

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Visual Concepts

FOR THEIR SECOND game in the NBA 2K series, Sega and Visual Concepts decided it was time to delve into the league's past with the addition of some new teams consisting of the best players from the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s. A new Franchise mode gave players more control over the management side of things than the last game's Season mode did, while the addition of online multiplayer made it possible for up to eight players to take part in (rather laggy) matches via the Dreamcast's modem. Street basketball was also added to 2K1, with Visual Concepts actually adding real-life street courts like The Cage in New York's Greenwich Village, Rucker Park in Harlem and Franklin Park in Boston. ■

FACT

While most annual sports games tend to feature a different cover athlete every year, the Philadelphia 76ers' Allen Iverson was the cover star of the first five NBA 2K games.

NBA 2K2

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Visual Concepts

GIVEN SEGA'S PLAN to ditch the Dreamcast and go third-party, the final NBA 2K game on the Dreamcast also marked the first time Sega would take the series to other formats. As such, 2K2 is more of an iterative improvement than a complete overhaul, with things like refined defensive AI, updated rosters, new dunk animations and new NBA regulations like the 8-second backcourt rule being listed as key new features. Online multiplayer returned and this time players' wins and losses were tracked in the first example of a ranking system in the series, while the existing street courts were joined by a new addition, Mosswood Park in Oakland, California (presumably because the offerings in the previous year's game showed a bit of an east coast bias). ■

FACT

Sega continued to make NBA 2K games until NBA 2K5. After this it sold Visual Concepts to Take-Two Interactive, which formed 2K Sports and took over from NBA 2K6 onwards.

NBA HOOPZ

Year 2001
Publisher Midway
Developer Eurocom

NBA HOOPZ WAS the final game in Midway's 'traditional' NBA Jam series, which had something of a complicated history as it neared its end (see NBA Showtime over the page for more information). After the publisher decided to finally make the switch from sprite-based to polygonal graphics in the previous year's NBA Showtime, it went perhaps a step too far in NBA Hoopz, ditching the series' traditional two-on-two basketball for three-on-three gameplay instead. Perhaps even more controversially, it added fouls to what was until then a lawless series, though the system was still fairly lenient: you only gave away a foul shot after multiple infringements. As well as the main three-on-three option the game also includes a few mini-games like 2 Ball (where you have a limited time to score more than your opponent) and 21 (where the first player to score exactly 21 points is the winner, and if they go over that their score is reset to 11). The addition of a new 'Hoopz button' lets the player back-in or post-up on an opponent or throw hook shots, adding further complications to a series best known for its simplicity. Ultimately, reception to NBA Hoopz was somewhat tepid, as even though it was supposed to be a spiritual successor to NBA Jam it lacked some of the more zany elements of the series (including its direct predecessor NBA Showtime). The only exception was the addition of secret arenas, allowing players to compete on a street court or a beach court. ■

FACT

Shaquille O'Neal was reportedly paid $1 million to do motion capture for NBA Hoopz, appear on the cover and fulfil other promotional obligations.

NBA SHOWTIME: NBA ON NBC

Year	1999
Publisher	Midway
Developer	Avalanche Software

ALTHOUGH THE NBA Jam arcade series of basketball games was originally the creation of Midway, the publisher/developer did a deal with Acclaim giving it the rights to make home versions during the 16-bit era and beyond. Over time, however, legal wrangling led to Acclaim somehow earning the rights to the NBA Jam name entirely, leaving Midway high and dry without the ability to make any more basketball games using the name it had originally created. What Midway did have, however, was the original NBA Jam team. So, with a newly acquired NBA licence, Midway and the series' original creators decided to press on with NBA Hangtime, the 'proper' next NBA Jam game (as opposed to the odd 5-on-5 versions Acclaim was making with the NBA Jam name). Hangtime looked very similar to the previous NBA Jam games, making use of digital sprites à la Mortal Kombat. For its next game, however, Midway decided to completely revamp the series by switching to polygonal graphics. The result was NBA Showtime, a game that felt very much like the Jam titles of the past but had a more modern art style bringing it into the three-dimensional era.

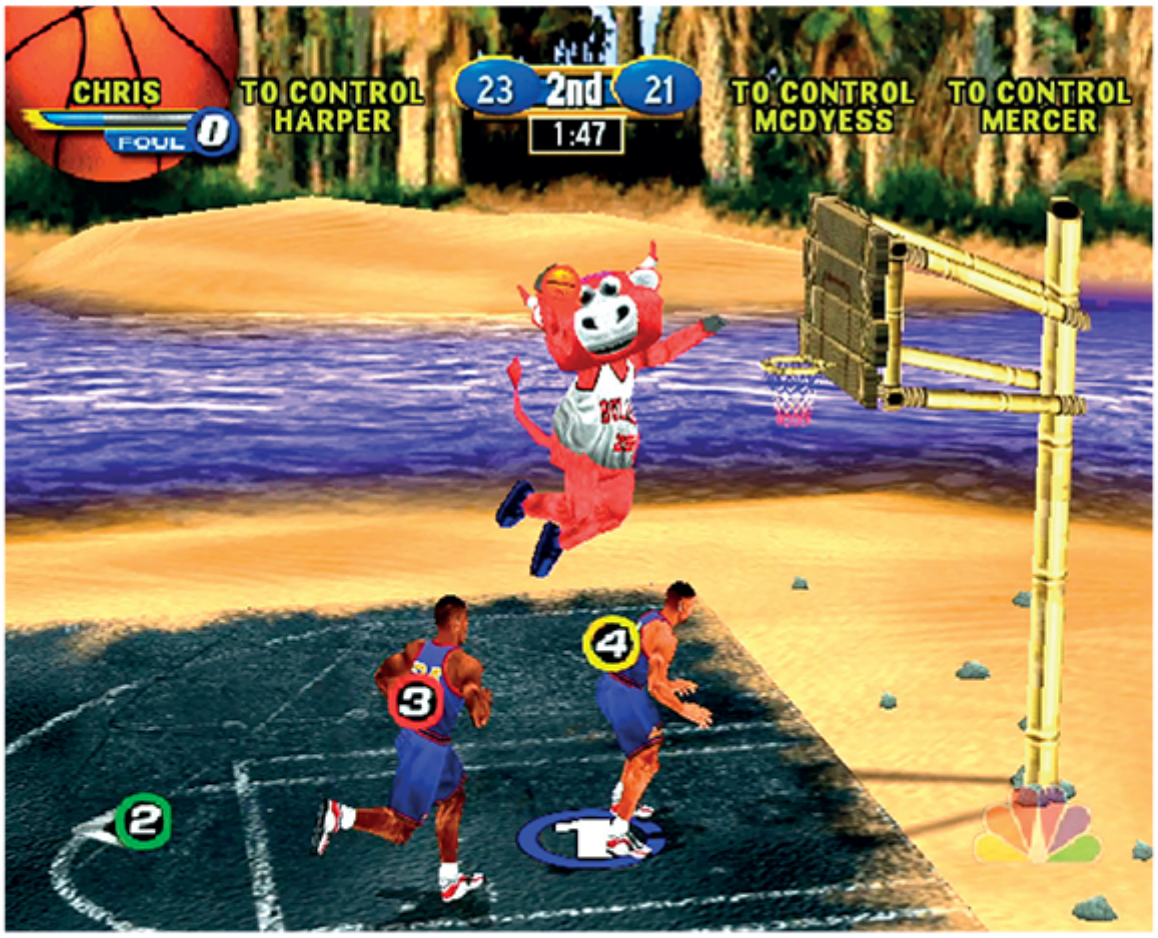
Despite its new polygonal visuals, Showtime players very much like its predecessors. The action is strictly arcade-like in nature with two-on-two matches and no fouls, meaning you're free

to shove your opponent onto their backside with reckless abandon. Players choose their favourite team then play their way through every other team in the NBA, trying to out-dunk and out-score them in an attempt to be crowned the NBA Showtime champion. Although the game only allows two players on the court at a time, each team has a number of real-life players to choose from, meaning players can make substitutions after each quarter should the situation call for it (behind on points? Bring on your 3-pointer expert).

Adding more depth to the game is the ability to create your own player from a series of preset parts. Some of these are real player faces (so if you want to make a clone of Scottie Pippen or Shaq you can), while others are significantly less sensible: should you wish, for example, you can make your player look like one of the NBA team mascots. Which means, yes, your dream of playing as the actual Toronto Raptor or Benny the Bull can finally come true. As you play through matches with your created player you'll earn stat points which can be used to improve their abilities, meaning over time you could have a future Hall of Famer on your hands. Given that the next Midway game would be the underwhelming NBA Hoopz, and that Acclaim was in the process of ruining the NBA Jam IP in its own way, NBA Showtime could be considered the final 'true' two-on-two NBA Jam game, something that remained the case for quite some time until EA resurrected the franchise during the Wii era. But that's for another book. ■

FACT

The arcade version featured Universal Monsters as hidden characters. These were removed from the Dreamcast game, but some hidden players still wear a Universal Monsters jersey.



NCAA COLLEGE FOOTBALL 2K2: ROAD TO THE ROSE BOWL

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Visual Concepts

WE'LL GET TO the NFL 2K series in a couple of pages, but alphabetical order dictates that we first take a look at this spin-off that was created with the same game engine. As the name suggests, NCAA is essentially an NFL 2K game with the pro football teams replaced by college football teams instead. There are 117 school teams to choose from, split into 11 subdivision conferences – the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Then, Big 12, Big East, Conference USA, Mid-American Conference, Mountain West, Pac-10, Southeastern Conference, Sun Belt Conference and Western Athletic Conference – and a group of independents (like the Navy team and Notre Dame). There are two main modes in the game, Season and Legacy. The first takes you through a single season, with the aim being to make it to the Rose Bowl to try and win the National Championship, while hopefully picking up the Heisman trophy for one of your players along the way. Legacy mode starts off the same way, but once the first season has ended you then have five weeks to head out and try to recruit new players to come to your school's football programme by interviewing them and putting them through spring training. Each team has their own specific playbooks that mirror those of their real-life college counterparts at the time, or you can make your own plays from scratch. It's an extremely detailed game in all ways but one: because the NCAA had a strict policy about its players appearing in video games, everyone is simply represented by a number. ■

FACT

Because of the NCAA's strict likeness policy, the game's cover star was instead former college star Drew Brees, who had just joined the NFL by then.

THE NEXT TETRIS: ON-LINE EDITION

Year 2000
Publisher Crave Entertainment
Developer Blue Planet Software

IT WAS SLIGHTLY confusing being a Tetris fan in 1999. While Nintendo and developer H2O Entertainment had released The New Tetris for the N64, Hasbro Interactive and Blue Planet had instead released The Next Tetris for the PlayStation. While clearly sharing similarities when it came to title and basic gameplay mechanics, both games were entirely different. The New Tetris is covered extensively in *The N64 Encyclopedia* (cheap plug), so let's look at The Next Tetris, which came to Dreamcast the following year. This includes a Tetris Classic mode which plays exactly as you'd expect, as well as the controversial Next Tetris mode. In this, the Tetriminos keep their traditional shapes but are made of randomly coloured blocks. When a line is cleared and some Tetriminos partially disappear as a result, the remaining colours separate and fall independently, leading to potential chain reactions as they cascade downwards. Next Tetris mode has a single-player mode (where you clear certain blocks to move onto the next stage), a two-player competitive mode and a Marathon mode, while Tetris Classic mode takes you straight into a basic Tetris well with no speed or difficulty settings. The North American version of the game allowed players to connect online and play the Next Tetris mode against others, but this functionality was removed for the European and Australian PAL regions. As such, the PAL versions of the game don't have the 'On-Line Edition' subtitle on the box. ■

FACT

If the dash in 'On-Line' annoys you, don't worry. It's a deliberate pun about clearing lines, see?

NFL 2K

Year 1999
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Visual Concepts

ACCORDING TO FORMER Sega of America president Bernie Stolar, EA was only willing to bring its sports games to the Dreamcast if it had 'sports exclusivity', making the likes of Madden and NBA the only games in town (literally). The problem was, Sega had acquired sports-focused studio Visual Concepts for $10 million, so EA decided to take its various balls and go home. With a huge gap in the Dreamcast's library, Sega and Visual Concepts set about filling it with their own Sega Sports games, and arguably the best of the bunch was NFL 2K, Sega's answer to Madden. With over 1,500 motion-captured animations, Visual Concepts claimed that NFL 2K's players had six times the number of animations as its competition, and there was no denying that for the time it was an extremely slick-looking game. The full suite of team and player licences were included, and all 31 NFL stadiums had been recreated in the game. While the range of modes available was fairly modest – exhibition games, a Season and a Playoffs mode were about all that was on offer – it did the job where it mattered: on the field. Not only did it play a solid game of American football (player collisions were physics-based to make them more realistic, for example), it also featured one of the best uses of the VMU on the console. While playing a local multiplayer game, players could use the screen on the VMU to select their next play, meaning their opponent wouldn't be able to see what they'd chosen. ■

FACT

Rather than using real-life commentators, NFL 2K used voice actors. The lead announcer was 'Dan Stevens', who was played by Terry McGovern, the voice of Launchpad McQuack in DuckTales.

NFL 2K1

Year 2000
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Visual Concepts

NFL 2K1 REMEDIED the sparse feature set of the first game by adding a number of new modes that were missing, and they were more or less the same features that were being added to NBA 2K1 as well. Online multiplayer for up to eight players was included (as in two Dreamcasts connected with up to four players in each home), while a new Franchise mode gave the player more control over their team's management than simply playing through a series of games. Meanwhile, the number of animations had been increased from around 1,500 to 2,000, while an 'enhanced running game' made it easier for players to block and juke incoming tackles. Naturally, the game also featured updated rosters for the 2000/01 NFL season. ■

FACT

The game supported the Dreamcast Keyboard, allowing you to talk smack (or just chat) with your opponent online, with your message appearing at the bottom like a sports ticker.

NFL 2K2

Year 2001
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Visual Concepts

AS WITH THE NBA 2K games, NFL 2K2 was the last game in the series that would be released on the Dreamcast, with Sega later releasing it on other consoles as part of its transformation into a third-party software house. Because of the extra work required in bringing the game to the PlayStation 2 and Xbox, 2K2 had fewer major enhancements this time around, and was only a modest improvement over its predecessor as a result. The animation system was given another little freshening up, while Visual Concepts claimed it included 'more lines of commentary than any NFL game'. For the most part, though, if you want to add an NFL 2K game to your Dreamcast library and can find 2K1 for cheaper than 2K2, you aren't missing out on much. ■

FACT

Like the NBA 2K games, the NFL 2K series continued until NFL 2K5. This stopped dead in late 2004, though, when EA signed an exclusivity deal with the NFL.

NFL BLITZ 2000

Year 1999
Publisher Midway
Developer Avalanche Software

NFL BLITZ WAS to American football what NBA Jam was to basketball. Essentially, following the huge success of NBA Jam, Midway decided to try it with other sports and Blitz was its take on the NFL (2000 was the third game in the series, and the first on Dreamcast). As such, many of the rules have been completely overhauled to make things more exciting: faster running speeds and cannon-like passes mean players have to cover 30 yards in four downs instead of 10, while things like the 'unnecessary roughness' rule simply don't exist, meaning it's perfectly legal to perform a legdrop on an opponent after a play ends. There are a number of hidden characters, including Raiden from Mortal Kombat and various dinosaur heads. ■

FACT

As with Mortal Kombat Gold, Midway rushed NFL Blitz 2000 to release with a lot of bugs. A reissued version (with a green sticker on the cover saying 'HOT! NEW!' and a red disc) fixed most of these.

NFL BLITZ 2001

Year 2000
Publisher Midway
Developer Avalanche Software

BY THE FOURTH NFL Blitz game Midway had more or less mastered the gameplay, but it was still finding ways of adding new features. This time the main addition is a new Party Games mode which consists of three mini-games. 1st & Goal Frenzy has you scoring a touchdown from different areas of the field, Goal Line Stand turns the idea on its head and has you defending touchdown attempts, and QB Challenge tasks you with successfully passing to three different receivers before you run out of time. A new Blitz Editors mode also gives the player more customisation options: while Blitz 2000 lets you create your own plays, this time you can also make your own players or entire teams. ■

FACT

The console versions of Blitz were based on the previous year's arcade game, so Blitz 2000 was the home version of Blitz 99 in arcades, and Blitz 2001 was based on Blitz 2000 Gold Edition.

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB 2000

Year 1999
Publisher Acclaim Sports
Developer Acclaim Studios Austin

IN THE DAYS before EA's exclusivity deal with the NFL, the league was handing its licence out like free samples at a cheese fair (yes, it's a thing). Acclaim's NFL series, Quarterback Club, started back in 1993 as a series of quarterback-focused mini-games before evolving to a more traditional American football offering. As well as the inclusion of the new expansion team the Tennessee Titans and the return of the glorious Cleveland Browns, Quarterback Club 2000's main gimmick was the Historic Simulation mode, which lets the player choose scenarios from all 33 Super Bowls that had been held up to that point, and lets them choose either team in an attempt to recreate or rewrite history. ■

FACT

If a player is injured, an exceptionally long animation plays out in which two medics walk onto the field, inspect him, call for an ambulance, place him on a stretcher and slowly drive off.

NFL QB CLUB 2001

Year 2000
Publisher Acclaim Sports
Developer High Voltage Software

THE SECOND QUARTERBACK Club game on the Dreamcast made a number of additions, as well as one subtraction (namely the letters 'uarterack' from the title). Most of these were focused on improving offensive gameplay, which some players felt was a little frustrating. A new shoulder charge move gave runners a more sturdy method of ploughing through defences, while the ability to bring up fake pass icons during running plays was designed to confuse your opponent when playing local multiplayer. An improved catching system also results in fewer dropped passes (though it's still trickier than in other NFL games of the era), and players could now save instant replays to create their own highlight reels. ■

FACT

The series would only last for one more game, with NFL QB Club 2002 releasing on the PS2 and GameCube before ending after eight entries.

NHL 2K

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Black Box

ANOTHER OMISSION RESULTING from EA's decision not to release sports games on the Dreamcast (see NFL 2K) was its NHL series, which had started back in 1991 and had continued to prove extremely popular among not only hockey fans but casual sports game fans too. With no way of the series ever arriving on the Dreamcast, Sega decided to go down the same route it had with its NBA and NFL games and created a new hockey series called NHL 2K. Whereas its basketball and American football titles were handled by Visual Concepts, however, NHL 2K was instead handed over to Canadian studio Black Box Games.

FACT

Somewhat ironically, Black Box Games was acquired by EA in 2002, where it would go on to develop NHL 2004 and NHL 2005, working on the series it was originally trying to compete with.

Like the other Dreamcast games in the Sega Sports series, NHL 2K's main selling point was its graphical oomph, boasting over 1,000 motion-captured animations and more than 100 of these dedicated just to the goalies (though in my experience, the one that plays most is them lying on the puck to stop play for a face-off). The NHL and NHLPA licences mean all teams and players are legit, while all 27 arenas have been recreated. Commentary, meanwhile, is provided by Hall of Famer Bob Cole and NHL coach Harry Neale, making NHL 2K the only Sega Sports series with real-life hockey names on commentary instead of fictional characters. It was reported at the time, though, that Black Box only had half the time to make NHL 2K that Visual Concepts had to make its NBA and NFL games, and this showed with its fewer features and 30fps frame rate. ■

NHL 2K2

Year 2002
Publisher Sega
Developer Treyarch

IT WAS EXPECTED that Black Box would make the next NHL 2K game too, but the studio ultimately chose not to continue its relationship with Sega and signed up with Midway to start its arcade-like NHL Hitz series instead. With nobody available to work on NHL 2K1, Sega turned to Triple Play Baseball developer Treyarch (with help from its tried and tested Visual Concepts team) and let it skip the 2K1 entry, giving it a little longer to come up with NHL 2K2 instead. The most immediately obvious difference between this game and Black Box's previous title is the jump in frame rate from 30 to 60fps, making for a much more fluid game. The usual full line-up of NHL teams was this time joined by 14 international teams, allowing players to indulge in that classic Canada vs USA grudge match, while commentary duties were this time handled by LA Kings announcer Bob Miller. Players' height and weight had more of an impact on how they played, while new advanced controls activated by holding down the L trigger let the player pull off dekes, side steps, flip passes and slap shots. While the game itself was praised for being a significant jump in quality over NHL 2K, these days it's more notable for something else: NHL 2K2 was the last Dreamcast game officially released in North America, marking the final 'death' of Sega's console business in that region. ■

FACT

The last console game in the series was NHL 2K11, which was released on the Wii. After that, the only other game in the series was a 2014 mobile title simply named NHL 2K.

NIGHTMARE CREATURES II

Year	2000
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Kalisto

THE ORIGINAL NIGHTMARE Creatures was released on the PlayStation, N64 and PC and told the story of a devil-worshipping cult called the Brotherhood of Hecate, who planned on taking over London with their evil experiments. The sequel takes place 100 years later and sees its main antagonist, Adam Crowley, returning with a new scheme to resurrect an ancient evil and merge with it in order to become the most powerful entity on Earth and take over the entire world. Only one man stands between Crowley and his nefarious plans: Herbert Wallace. Wallace was kidnapped by Crowley at a young age and subjected to horrific experiments over the years, but he's finally escaped his cell and is looking for revenge. As the mentally scarred Wallace – physically deformed from years of torture – the player has to stumble their way through London and later Paris as they try to track Crowley, while killing the grotesque monsters he encounters along the way. As you can tell, it's not quite *Peppa Pig*.

Whereas the first game let players choose between two characters, this time there's no such variety: it's Herbert Wallace or nothing. That aside, the game does still play similarly to its predecessor, sharing its third-person adventure stylings. As you make your way through the game's 30 locations (including the likes of castles, sewers, catacombs and the Eiffel Tower itself) you bump into a series of creatures, from basic zombies all the way up

to giant mutant spider-person things. Oddly, while you can sometimes encounter multiple enemies at a time, once Wallace locks his gaze onto one of them that's the only one who'll encounter him, meaning fights against more than one creature end up more like '80s martial arts movies where the hero fights one opponent while the others gormlessly stand there, waiting for their turn.

Wallace is armed with his trusty axe for the most part, but on occasion he can also arm himself with a gun to attack enemies from a distance. Combat is straightforward enough with a handful of basic combos on offer, and when you wear an enemy's health down until it's nearly empty you can hit X+A together to perform a fatality move, often involving a lot of blood splatters. There are also some special power-ups which can be found along the way, the oddest being a jar of flies which can be sent swarming over to an enemy's head, causing it to explode.

FACT

The game has a 'Therapy' mode, which basically gives you infinite health and an endless series of enemies to carve your way through.

Ultimately, while the original Nightmare Creatures was praised for its gothic setting and its solid gameplay, the sequel was met with a more negative reception. Visually, the game was criticised for not pushing the Dreamcast to its limits and offering murky, grimy stage design (despite having the option to apply a blur filter to some of the game's blockier textures), while the clunky, repetitive combat didn't do the game any favours either. Its cutscenes do make use of nine Rob Zombie songs, though, so that's one thing it certainly did have going for it. ■

THE NOMAD SOUL

Year	2000
Publisher	Eidos Interactive
Developer	Quantic Dream

YOU KNOW A game's going to be unique when it opens with the protagonist jumping out of the game and telling you, the player, to be careful with his body when you take over it because it's the only one he has. So begins The Nomad Soul (known in North America as Omikron: The Nomad Soul), the first game by French studio Quantic Dream which, led by the controversial David Cage, would go on to create the likes of Heavy Rain, Beyond: Two Souls and Detroit: Become Human. And just as an advance warning, there's a spoiler coming up which describes a crucial game mechanic that's added later in the game.

The protagonist in question is Kay'l 669, a police officer from the futuristic city of Omikron, who asks the player to leave their dimension, take over Kay'l's body with their soul, and enter Omikron as him. Once this happens, it's up to the player to take over the investigation that Kay'l and his now-deceased partner were working on, an attempt to find and stop a serial killer who may or may not be a demon. To go into more detail on the game's plot would potentially require a book of its own, such is its bizarre, convoluted and frequently fourth-wall breaking nature, but suffice to say you'll never play anything else like it.

The game itself is generally a third-person adventure game but it's more than happy to switch to a different style of gameplay at a moment's notice. At times the action will switch to a first-person shooter, while every now and then when you encounter a certain enemy it'll suddenly switch to a side-on perspective and become a one-on-one fighting game. And just when everything starts to feel like it's beginning to make sense, Kay'l dies and you realise that because you're still playing as yourself, your own soul leaves him and you can now take over the body of one of around 40 other NPCs living in Omikron. It's a twist similar to that in Psycho, where the impression is given that there's a clear protagonist you should be trying to relate to, before they're suddenly killed and you realise the story's about someone else entirely: in this case, it's about you, the player, as the titular Nomad Soul, passing from body to body.

FACT

When the Omicron variant of COVID-19 was discovered in 2021, anti-vax conspiracy theorists shared a clip from the game in which Bowie tells the people of Omikron to 'wake up' and fight for their freedom.

The other most notable element of The Nomad Soul is the involvement of David Bowie and his frequent collaborator and former bandmate, guitarist Reeves Gabriels. It's said that Bowie was approached to provide the game's theme song, but that he refused and instead offered to provide an entire album's worth of music. Not only did the final game contain 10 new Bowie tracks, it also starred the man himself as two characters: a fugitive mercenary called Boz who only exists inside a computer network, and the lead singer of Omikron's popular band The Dreamers. Bowie's involvement is just one of many factors that go into making The Nomad Soul a truly unique, bold debut for Quantic Dream. ■

OOGA BOOGA

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Visual Concepts

WHILE VISUAL CONCEPTS mainly specialised in sports games on the Dreamcast, it did find time to release two non-sporting titles in 2001. The first was Floigan Bros, found elsewhere in this book, and the second was Ooga Booga, a multiplayer game set on a series of desert islands. Players choose from a selection of Kahunas, the leaders of tribes who are all vying for dominance. The four Kahunas initially available are fairly stereotypical, each representing the Amazonian 'Hottie' tribe, the ghostly 'Hoodoo' tribe, the speedy 'Twitchy' tribe and the… well, the 'Fatty' tribe.

Each character has their own power, endurance and speed stats, which all come into play during each battle. There are three main game modes: Smakahuna is a free-for-all combat situation where you get one point for hitting an opponent with a projectile and two points for a melee hit or running them over with a wild boar (which you can stun and mount then ride around). Rodeo is similar but only hits with wild boars count, and Boar Polo is essentially football where all the players are riding boars. It's a game that leans heavy on the boar side of things, if that wasn't clear. While the game can still be played these days in single-player mode or with split-screen support for up to four players, its selling point at the time was very much the ability to play against opponents online, sharing the slightly culturally stereotypically concerning fun with players in other homes. ■

FACT

Ooga Booga had copy protection: playing an illegal copy made a pirate appear and dance at the player. You can bring this up in a legit copy by entering the password WAREZWRONG.

OUTTRIGGER

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega AM2

PEOPLE OFTEN SAY the Dreamcast was ahead of its time, and games like Outtrigger only serve to reinforce this point. It's technically one of the first 'hero shooters' as, much like games like Overwatch many years later, it has players choosing a character with their own unique abilities and pitting them against others in a deathmatch scenario. Each character – Jay the balanced Brit, Alain the similarly-balanced Frenchman, the fast but weak Japanese soldier Lina and Talon the slow but powerful American – is a member of the International Counterterrorism Special Force, and the main arcade mode has you picking a character and taking out a set number of enemies before the timer runs out. The Dreamcast version, however, was most notable for its deathmatch mode, which could be played in split-screen for up to four players, or could be played online (though not in Europe, sadly). One of the more interesting elements of Outtrigger is that it's easily the game with the widest range of control methods on the Dreamcast. The game supports the normal controller, the Dreamcast Mouse and the Dreamcast Keyboard, and players could combine any two with a sizable variety of button combinations for each. Indeed, the Japanese version of Outtrigger was actually bundled with a Dreamcast Mouse, so no prizes for guessing what Sega felt the best method was. The customisation doesn't stop at the control methods either, as the game also allows players to switch between third-person and first-person viewpoints at will, something most modern games don't even offer. ■

FACT

The original arcade version was a rare example of an arcade FPS. It made use of a unique control system where players moved the character with a joystick and aimed with a trackball.

PENPEN TRIICELON

Year 1998
Publisher Infogrames
Developer General Entertainment

OF ALL THE launch games for the Dreamcast, PenPen TriIcelon is easily the oddest. The game takes place on the Iced Planet, a world which is almost entirely covered with ice and snow. It's also where PenPens, a species of odd penguin-like creatures, live together in harmony. One day a bunch of other animals visiting the Iced Planet saw the PenPens playing on the ice, and decided to come up with the TriIcelon (that's Tri-icelon, with a capital 'I' in there, if it's hard to read), a sort of triathlon-style event that takes place in the Iced Planet's various locations. Whereas a human triathlon consists of running, swimming and cycling, the TriIcelon instead consists of running, swimming and belly-surfing on ice.

PenPen TriIcelon, then – or just PenPen in Europe – is a racing game where players choose from seven different animal characters (with one unlockable one) and try to reach the finish line before their rivals. There are four locations in the game – the confectionery-covered Sweets, the cave-riddled Jungle, the colourful Toys and the ghost-infested Horrors – and each has five different races with varying levels of length and difficulty. Depending on the track chosen, players race through either three or four different areas, each focusing on a different discipline. To win a race, then, you'll need to switch between belly-surfing, swimming and standard running and jumping, all while avoiding obstacles and your opponents.

FACT

The characters from PenPen TriIcelon can be seen on some posters in Blue Stinger, in the Christmas-themed mall.

Despite being a racing game, PenPen TriIcelon doesn't have you holding down an accelerator button as normal. Instead, depending on which part of the race you're on, the game uses either a timing-based system or simple platformer controls. When you're swimming underwater or belly-surfing on the ice you have to hold the A button down to perform a stroke, then quickly let go and press it again to perform another one. Doing it too quickly means you don't get to build up momentum, so the aim is to do slow, deliberate strokes to gain speed.

The on-foot sections, meanwhile, play a lot like Fall Guys, with each character controlled with simple run and jump buttons, as well as a charge button which can take an opponent out if you hit them, or take yourself out if you miss.

The main thing that lets PenPen TriIcelon down (other than the fact that the character who presents the Jungle stage is a horribly outdated racist stereotype) is that because it's mainly aimed at children it can be a little on the easy side. While there's plenty of gameplay to be found – each of the four stages have five different races, which each have to be completed twice to unlock all the customisation clothing parts in the game – once you get the hang of the timing needed for the strokes the AI doesn't really put up much of a fight. Despite this, it's still worth a look if you find it cheap, because it's such an oddly presented game and its four-player split-screen races can be fairly chaotic. ■

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sonic Team

SINCE ONE OF the Dreamcast's main unique selling points was its ability to connect online, Sega wanted the system to have a marquee online title that would show off the kind of brand new experiences internet connectivity could bring to console gaming. According to then-Sonic Team head Yuji Naka in a 2011 interview, none of the internal Sega teams wanted to work on the game. 'Everybody was hoping someone else would do it,' he said. As 'luck' would have it, Sega chairman Isao Okawa handed the responsibility to Sonic Team, tasking it with creating the game that would pave the way for online console multiplayer for years to come. No pressure. Citing Diablo as its main inspiration (because it didn't want to try a massively multiplayer game like EverQuest), Sonic Team got to work on an action RPG. During the concept art stage it was decided that this wouldn't be any old RPG, but the next chapter in the Phantasy Star series, which had been massively popular on 8-bit and 16-bit consoles but had mainly lain dormant throughout the Saturn's life.

The game's initial plot is fairly straightforward. With the destruction of their home planet imminent, a group of scientists come up with the Pioneer Project, which would send unmanned probes into deep space to find a new habitable planet. That planet is Ragol, and before long a transport ship called *Pioneer 1* is sent there to start colonising the planet and build a new home. Seven years later, *Pioneer 2* (including your character) makes its way to the planet, but just before you get there you see a massive explosion and all contact with the colonists of *Pioneer 1* is lost. Time to land on Ragol and find out what's going on, ideally in a group with strangers you just bumped into.

FACT

At the time, Japan was charging per minute for internet use. To help push Phantasy Star Online, Okawa bundled a year's free internet access with every console, which he paid for out of his own pocket.

After choosing a 'ship' (i.e. an online lobby), Phantasy Star Online lets players join a team of up to four players, or create their own team if none of them seem inviting enough. Teams are then sent to the game world together to fight alongside each other, with a Hunter's Guild area providing them extra side-quests on top of the overall aim to find out what happened to *Pioneer 1*. Combat is real-time, as is conversation: players can either use an on-screen keyboard or connect a Dreamcast keyboard to chat with their teammates. If it turns out your partners are from another country, you can also choose from a series of preset words and phrases, which the game can automatically translate to five different languages.

Sega shut down the Phantasy Star Online servers back in 2010, but there continue to be private servers running the game to this day (at the time of writing, Sylverant appears to be the most populated). If the idea of hooking your Dreamcast up to your phone line sounds like a massive hassle, the game can still be played entirely offline, though naturally this is something of a lesser experience. ■

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE VER 2

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sonic Team

BECAUSE PHANTASY STAR Online was slightly rushed to get it on the shelves, it launched with a number of bugs and other issues, and was also lacking some features that Sonic Team wanted to add but didn't have time to. This was remedied near the end of the Dreamcast's life with the release of Phantasy Star Online Ver 2, an updated version that fixed a number of these issues and added new things to do. Players with a save file from the original game could bring it over to Ver 2, so with those people in mind the game's level cap was increased from 100 to 200 and a new Ultimate difficulty mode was added for those who had already spent untold hours playing the first version. A new Battle mode let players fight against each other instead of being on the same side, while those still looking to work together could play through the new Challenge mode, which gives players revised versions of certain stages and forces them to work together (if one player died, everyone lost). There was also a new football mini-game called Go-Go Ball, where players kicked around oversized footballs shaped like Chu-Chu Rocket cats. Ver 2 wasn't quite as popular as the first version: partly because the Dreamcast was close to death, and partly because North American players now had to pay a monthly $5 subscription fee to play, something Japanese players already had to do the first time around. ■

FACT

The Battle mode was actually present in beta versions of the original game and shown to the press, but it was removed because Naka wanted cooperation to be the main focus.

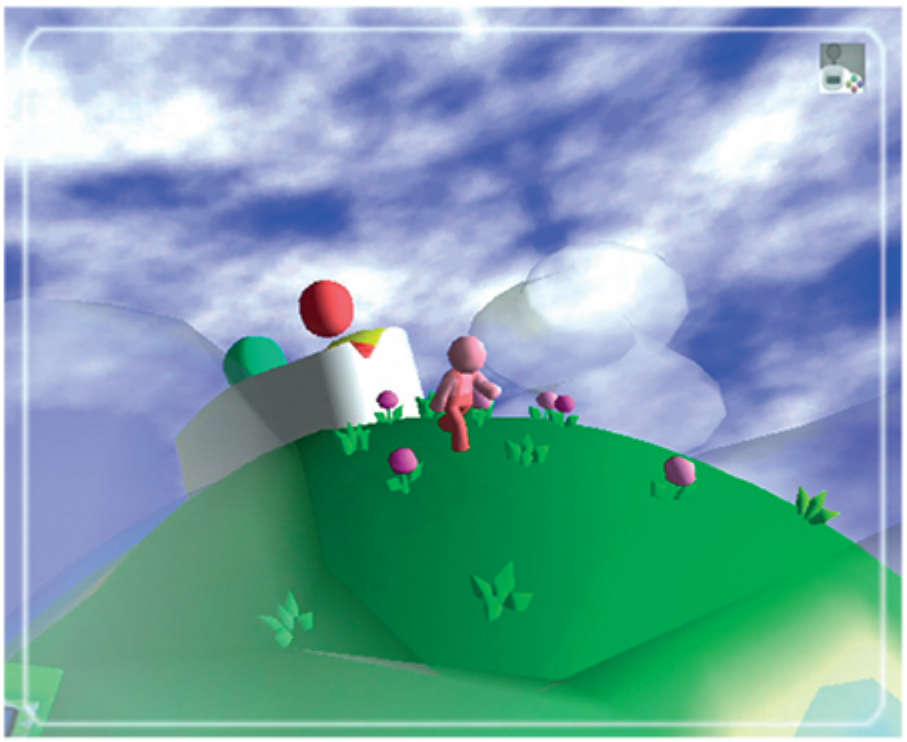
PLANET RING

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

PLANET RING WAS a Europe-only release designed to promote online multiplayer on the Dreamcast, to the extent that the whole thing was given away free with the *Official Dreamcast Magazine* in the UK. Players have to be connected online to take part in its four mini-games, each of which provided a different taste of the joys of playing online at a time when the concept was still completely new to console players. The first of these games, Ball Bubble, has players trying to raise and lower land (similar to Wetrix) in an attempt to make coloured balls drop into their area. Soar is an extremely basic racing game where you guide a ship that looks a bit like a whoopee cushion around a track, blowing air out of it to move forwards. Splash is an online version of Battleship with a couple of tweaks, such as the ability to forfeit a turn in order to move one of your ships. Most unique, however, is Dream Dorobo, which provides an 'asymmetrical' two-screen multiplayer experience long before the Wii U did it. One player is in a maze and has to navigate it, while the other player has a zoomed out, top down view of the whole maze and has to give their partner instructions so they know where to go. Each game also made use of the Dreamcast Microphone – indeed, it was practically essential for Dream Dorobo – and the entire package did an interesting job of introducing players to the world of online gaming. ■

FACT

Being an online-only game, Planet Ring died when the Dreamcast did. However, there are now open-source servers designed to resurrect some online Dreamcast games, Planet Ring being one of them.



PLASMA SWORD: NIGHTMARE OF BILSTEIN

Year	1999
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

THIS CAPCOM FIGHTING game is the sequel to the arcade and PlayStation title Star Gladiator: indeed, in Japan its name is Star Gladiator 2 instead of Plasma Sword. At the end of the previous game the evil cybernetic mad scientist Dr Bilstein had seemingly been killed, but as any good video series will tell you, you can't keep a good bad guy down, and so he's only gone and transferred his spirit into another cybernetic body so he can continue his reign. Oh, and just for a laugh, his old cybernetic body has a tiny bit of spirit left in it, so it too comes to life and fights as 'Ghost Bilstein'. Cue a bunch of fighters chucking themselves into a battle in an attempt to find and bring down Bilstein and save the universe from potential destruction. Like its predecessor, Plasma Sword is a 3D one-on-one fighting game in which each fighter is armed with their own weapon. New to this game is a Plasma Gauge, which basically works like the super meter you'd see in most Street Fighter games, and lets you pull off special moves by building it up. Although the stages are essentially endless – there's no Ring Out like there was in the first game – you can perform a new move called a Plasma Field, which not only gives you a special ability for a brief period of time but also temporarily creates a box that traps you and your opponent together so they can't escape. ■

FACT

One of the fighters is June, a British-Chinese rhythmic gymnast. She appears as a playable character in the massive crossover game Project X Zone 2 on the 3DS.

POD 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Ubisoft
Developer	Ubisoft Romania

THE ORIGINAL POD (or to give it its full name, POD: Planet of Death) was a futuristic PC racing game released in 1997. PC-owning fans of the game hoping to play its sequel, however, would have to make the jump to consoles, as POD 2 (known as POD: Speedzone in North America) was a Dreamcast exclusive. The slightly bizarre story goes that an alien creature called POD has started taking control of all the life forms in the mining colony of Damethra. This leads to mutant vehicles driving around and spreading the virus, so it's up to you to… um, beat them in races. For some reason. Regardless, the dodgy plot is just a front for the actual racing itself, which takes place on six tracks, each with a handful of alternate routes and sneaky shortcuts. Cars have a finite health bar and boost meter, both of which can be topped up by on-track power-ups. The game also boasts online racing for up to four players, with the ability to upload lap times to an online leaderboard. Be warned, though: if you plan on getting hold of the game to play it today, two of the eight cars and one of the six tracks require you to create an online account to unlock them, so unless you're willing to do some reading and find out how to connect your Dreamcast's modem to an open-source server, some of the game is going to be permanently unavailable to you. ■

FACT

This was one of only six games released in North America that supported the Dreamcast Broadband Adapter for faster online play.

POWER STONE

Year	1999
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

WHEN IT COMES to cult favourites on the Dreamcast, they don't get bigger than Power Stone. Capcom's fighting game is regularly cited as one of the best titles on the console, and one of the games most players would love to see returning to the modern era (which hasn't happened yet at the time of writing). Set in the nineteenth century, it tells the story of a group of 10 fighters who are travelling the world in search of the Power Stone, a mythical gem said to be able to make any dream come true. And, naturally, they have to beat each other up along the way.

The game is a one-on-one fighter, which on paper sounds like the sort of thing that Capcom churns out in its sleep, but this isn't your typical 2D fighter in the style of Street Fighter II or Darkstalkers. Instead, Power Stone's fights take place in full 3D arenas, set in the likes of town squares, restaurants, shopping centres and pirate ships. Players are given free rein to run around wherever they like, even grabbing onto low ceilings and pulling themselves up to higher platforms in some levels. Scattered around each stage are a number of objects and weapons, which can be picked up with the B button and used against opponents. These range from heavy blunt objects like tables and chairs, to melee weapons like swords, or even the occasional firearm. Some parts of the scenery can also be used, with characters handling them in different ways depending on their size. Smaller characters, for example, can grab onto vertical columns, spin around them and fling themselves at opponents at high speed, while larger, stronger characters can simply pluck an entire column out of the ground and swing it around like a massive baseball bat.

The key to gaining the edge in each fight is the titular Power Stones, of which there are three. At the start of every round, each character already has one Power Stone in their possession, and the third spawns somewhere random on the stage at some point during the battle, where it can be collected. By performing strong combo attacks on your opponent or hitting them with items, you can force them to drop their own Power Stone, sending it flying across the arena. If you can grab all three Power Stones your fighter transforms into a more powerful form for a short while, enabling them to freely fire projectiles or trigger an enormous screen-filling special move which, should it connect, does huge amounts of damage.

FACT

The character Wang Tang's transformation looks suspiciously like a Super Saiyan form in Dragon Ball. What's more, his 'dairyuudama' move is similar to Goku's 'Genki Dama' move.

Power Stone was lauded for its relaxed approach to the rules and the carnage that can (and usually does) result as a consequence of this. Put two skilled Power Stone players in an arena and the result is a form of chaotic poetry, with tossed and dodged furniture filling the sky, interspersed with tense close-quarters combat and mad dashes to collect scattered Power Stones. ■

POWER STONE 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

CAPCOM HAD CLEARLY struck gold with Power Stone's free-roaming combat system, but when the inevitable sequel appeared the publisher had clearly decided that simply rehashing the first game wasn't going to be good enough. Instead, Power Stone 2 builds drastically on its predecessor's initial concept by adding a number of literal game-changing features which makes things even more chaotic than they previously were. The most obvious of these is the ability to now have fights with up to four players at the same time, ramping up the anarchy significantly. If two characters tossing chairs and boxes around was tumultuous, having four of them chucking things about is just pandemonium.

The main Arcade mode has a more interesting structure too, consisting of two four-way fights, then a boss fight, then another four-way fight and a final boss fight. Curiously, instead of trying to be the sole survivor in the four-way fights, the battle ends when there's only you and one AI opponent left, with you both progressing to the next stage. During boss fights the remaining AI fighter joins forces with you to take on the oversized enemy, so there's an element of strategy involved during the four-ways because if there's a specific character you'd like to accompany you in the boss fights you'll need to go out of your way to make sure they don't get hurt too much.

While each stage still has its own obstacles and gimmicks, players can now also collect items

in the game's new Adventure mode, which can then be unlocked in a shop and can then appear regularly during battles. There are over 130 items to unlock, ranging from straightforward weapons (a machine gun, a flamethrower, that sort of thing) to some truly bizarre objects. If you've ever dreamed of a game where you can attack an opponent with adhesive spray, a scooter, a wedding cake or a bear trap, Power Stone is the game for you. You can even hit them with an official Power Stone magazine, should you desire, proving that some weapons are more useful than others (there's a silk hat in there too, after all).

The other big change in Power Stone 2 is the way that stages now change as the battle progresses. While the first game's stages were standard standalone affairs, this time your fight can end in a different location to where you started. Take the game's most well-loved stage, the giant airship. At first you're all fighting on this enormous floating boat high up in the sky, but after a while the plane will begin to come apart (gravity clearly deciding that enough is enough), meaning the stage transitions to a free-falling section where the fighters plummet to the ground, while continuing to fight each other. Eventually they land on a floating platform, where the remainder of the fight takes place. It gives a more epic feel to proceedings, as if these fights are so momentous they can't be contained in a single location. ■

FACT

In 2006, the PSP got Power Stone Collection, which combined both games. It also took the four new characters added in Power Stone 2 and retroactively put them in the first game.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: ARABIAN NIGHTS

Year 2000
Publisher Mattel Interactive
Developer Avalanche Software

AS THE MILLENNIUM approached and the polygonal era established itself as the status quo, countless existing series had to make the jump from 2D to 3D. Given that the original Prince of Persia was all about making jumps anyway, it was only natural that it too would get the polygonal treatment. This would eventually happen in 1999 with PC game Prince of Persia 3D, which was then ported to the Dreamcast with a new Arabian Nights subtitle. The plot revolves around Assan, the brother of the Sultan, who is upset to hear that the Prince and Princess have been married because the Sultan had previously promised his daughter's hand in marriage to Assan's son (which I'm pretty sure is incest). Feeling betrayed, Assan has the Prince kidnapped and imprisoned in his dungeon. It's up to the Prince to firstly escape his captors then rescue the Princess before she's forced to marry her cousin. As the name implies, Prince of Persia 3D is an attempt to recreate the mechanics of the original title in three dimensions. The majority of the game focuses around platforming and puzzle solving, with the Prince able to leap long distances and cling onto ledges. Sword fighting also plays a role in the game as it did in the original, but this time the Prince can also get his hands on a spear or a bow and arrow. The Dreamcast port is generally agreed to be slightly better than the PC version because it fixes a number of bugs. ■

FACT

Prince of Persia creator Jordan Mechner wasn't a big fan of Arabian Nights, describing it in a 2004 interview as 'just Tomb Raider with baggy pants and a turban'.

PRO PINBALL TRILOGY

Year 2001
Publisher Empire Interactive
Developer Cunning Developments

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a pinball game on the Dreamcast, this is your only option (at least in the west). Pro Pinball Trilogy is a compilation of three tables from the Pro Pinball series, which were released individually on the PlayStation between 1996 and 2000. The first is Pro Pinball: Timeshock!, which is a table with a time-travelling theme. By using the time machine on the table you can travel between the present day, the distant future, Ancient Rome and the prehistoric era. The second table is Pro Pinball: Big Race USA, a road trip themed table which sees you travelling across America. Finally, Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey is a Victorian steampunk table that sees the player taking on five separate quests. While the games were individually praised at the time for their realism, and while having three previously full-price titles in a single compilation was undoubted value for money, the fact that each table uses pre-rendered assets means you can only view the entire table from above, rather than being able to zoom in and view it up close. As such, if you're playing on a smaller display or aren't using good video cables, you can miss out on a lot of the detail in each table. Although the Trilogy name suggests these are the first three games in the Pro Pinball series, it actually consists of the second, third and fourth games. The first, Pro Pinball: The Web, was already released on its own on the Saturn. ■

FACT

The game's designer and programmer would later form Fuse Games, and would team up with Nintendo to develop Mario Pinball Land on the GBA and Metroid Prime Pinball on the DS.

PROJECT JUSTICE

Year	2000
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

IN 1997, CAPCOM released Rival Schools: United by Fate, a polygonal fighting game that played much like Street Fighter (or, given its tag team format, more like Marvel vs Capcom) but had the unique twist that all of its fighters were students from several schools across Aoharu City in Japan. Project Justice is the sequel to Rival Schools, but while it shares the same core principles as its predecessor it does also try to mix things up a bit with some new gameplay mechanics.

Set a year after the events of Rival Schools, Project Justice revolves around Kurow Kirishima, a ninja assassin who's a nasty piece of work. Kurow wants to rule Japan, but the Imawano family stands in his way, so he carries out a number of plots designed to undermine the family and further his own plans for domination. First he attacks Raizo Imawano, the principal of Justice High School. Then he sends his sister and his right-hand man to join the schools' fighting teams to cause distrust among the pupils there. Next, he brainwashes a gang leader and gets him to instruct his gang members to attack school students. Finally, he disguises himself to look like Batsu (Raizo's son), and starts fighting the students themselves, leading them to think Batsu's doing it. It's up to Batsu and his friends to boot Kurow's head in and put an end to his scheming: not only to protect his family and stop his friends all falling out with each other, but to save Japan itself.

Combat is once again a 2.5D style, with polygonal 3D characters fighting on a flat 2D plane. Fighters only have four attack buttons compared to those in the Street Fighter games, giving them a smaller moveset but making them easier to learn as a result. Whereas Rival Schools featured 2v2 battles this time it's a 3v3 affair, though fights are still decided by the best of three rounds by default, meaning neither team gets to use their full roster. Key to the game are the Team-Up and Party-Up moves, which can be triggered by building up your 'vigour' meter, which goes up to five levels. By spending two bars of your meter, you can trigger a Team-Up move which, should you hit your opponent with it, brings in one of your partners to help out. The type of help depends on the character: some will jump in and help you beat up the opponent, while others may give you encouragement or replenish some health. Party-Up moves, meanwhile, need all five bars of your meter and have all three teammates combining their forces.

FACT

The Japanese arcade version let you insert a Dreamcast VMU and fight as your created character. Since the western versions didn't have character creation, the western arcade game didn't have a VMU slot.

The Japanese version differs greatly from the international ones because it has an entirely extra mode in which players can create their own fighter. Rather than a standard character creation suite, this comes in the form of a board game that determines your character's stats. Presumably because this would have taken too long to localise, in the west you can simply unlock a bunch of extra fighters who were seemingly just made with the character creator. ■

PSYCHIC FORCE 2012

Year	1999
Publisher	Taito
Developer	Taito

THIS IS A sequel to Psychic Force, a Taito-developed fighting game released in arcades and on PlayStation in 2006. Psychic Force 2012 takes place two years later and tells the story of two different factions of 'psychics' – people born with exceptional ESP powers – who both happen to be the bad guys. You've got Neo-Noah, a group of psychics looking to dominate humans and take over the world, and you've got The Army, a separate group of psychics looking to defeat Neo-Noah and… um, take over the world. And then there are independent psychics who just want to find their family and friends caught up in the war. Clearly, this is a fighting game where the story is a little more involved than in some others, which is why the home version includes both an Arcade mode (where you simply fight through eight characters) and a Story mode, where each character has their own plot. The actual combat itself differs from most one-on-one fighting games of its type in that players essentially fight in a giant cube and, given their psychic powers, can fly around in all directions. If you're up close to your opponent you can hit them with punches and kicks, but from a distance you can start firing projectiles at them, which uses up your 'Psycho Gauge'. However, as you lose health, your Psycho Gauge goes up, meaning you can pull off special moves with more frequency as your back goes against the wall (which it literally can, since you can hit each other off the walls of the cube). ■

FACT

The characters in Psychic Force 2012 are balanced well enough that the game has featured in numerous EVO Japan fighting game tournaments.

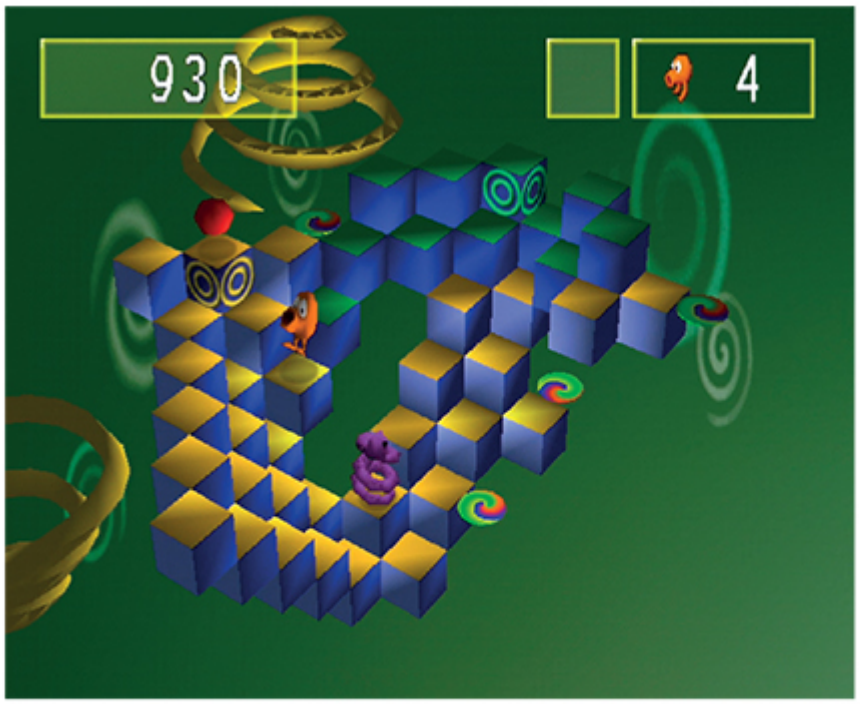
Q*BERT

Year	2000
Publisher	Majesco Sales
Developer	Pipe Dream Interactive

THE ORIGINAL Q*BERT was released in arcades way back in 1982 and had players guiding an orange creature (which looks a bit like an armless Birdo) around a series of pyramids. It's fair to say that people weren't exactly crying out in their masses for a remake, but that's exactly what Hasbro Interactive delivered nearly two decades later. Much like its source material, the shiny new Q*bert still involves making the titular trumpet-nose jump from cube to cube, changing their colour in an attempt to recolour the entire pyramid. Naturally, there are all manner of hindrances attempting to stop Q*bert, including numerous types of enemy who are also hopping around the pyramid. If an enemy hits Q*bert, he'll stop and bellow a (thankfully censored) obscenity before trying again. The game comes in two flavours: Classic and Adventure. Classic is a simple polygonal remake of the 1982 original, with Q*bert clearing single-screen pyramids while avoiding enemies. Adventure, meanwhile, is an attempt to give the gameplay more oomph by adding a story – Q*bert has to defeat his arch-nemesis Coily to rescue his kidnapped friends – and splitting the stages across four themed worlds. Power-ups have also been added in Adventure mode, giving Q*bert the ability to build and destroy cubes, or become invincible for a while. There are individual options to turn off the lighting, textures, shadows and backgrounds to give the game a more retro look. Turning them all of though, oddly, doesn't appear to affect performance. ■

FACT

The Coca-Cola company teamed up with Q*bert publisher Gottlieb in the '80s to release a limited edition version of the Q*bert arcade game in which he drank its Mello Yello soft drink between stages.



QUAKE III ARENA

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Raster Productions

THERE'S SURELY NO need to go into the history of Quake and how it's widely regarded as one of the most seminal examples of the first-person shooter genre, and one of the first to successfully pull off a high level of quality with full polygonal 3D graphics. After finding similar success with Quake II, developer id Software decided that the third game in the series would no longer have a single-player campaign and would instead focus mainly on the series' most popular mode: the multiplayer deathmatch.

There's still some single-player content in Quake III, but not much. The Arena Gauntlet mode lets solo shooters take on AI opponents across five stages, but the reality is that this mode serves more as practice for the main event. This is very much a multiplayer game first and foremost, with up to four players able to compete, either locally via split-screen or online against players all over the world: lag permitting, of course. Players can take part in one of four match types, most of which are mainstays of the genre: standard free-for-all Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag and Tournament (where pairs take turns to compete for the most kills in 1v1 battles). If you don't have three friends to play with – or you're a strictly single-player gamer and you really didn't do your research on this one – you can make up the numbers with AI bots.

Interestingly, the game not only lets players compete with other Dreamcast owners, but also allows them to connect to other PC owners, in one of the first examples of cross-platform online multiplayer. It should go without saying that PC owners generally had the edge in these scenarios, given that most Dreamcast players were using their humble single-stick controller. For those who really wanted a serious chance against their computer-using counterparts, though, the game also supported the use of the Dreamcast Keyboard and Dreamcast Mouse, levelling the playing field somewhat. Every action in the game is fully customisable, so you could move with a controller and aim with a mouse if you wanted to.

FACT

If players were using a Dreamcast Keyboard and Mouse to play the game, they could bring up a command console and type in codes to activate god mode, remove wall clipping and the like.

This was designed to give Dreamcast players as fair a fight as possible, but one aspect of the game didn't accomplish this: the frame rate. Although there were numerous games on the console that were pushing far more detailed graphics at 60 frames per second, the Dreamcast version of Quake III was locked at 30 frames per second, meaning players on relatively powerful PCs could benefit from faster response times. That said, the Dreamcast version of Quake III did include one extra feature that not many people speak about. By completing the single-player aspect of the game on any difficulty, players could unlock a basic maze game that could be transferred to the VMU and played there. Every time players cleared a stage of the maze game, they would unlock a cheat in the main game. ■

RACING SIMULATION 2: MONACO GRAND PRIX ON-LINE

Year 2001
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Paris

WE'VE ALREADY LOOKED at the confusing string of titles this game received in various countries (see the entry for Monaco Grand Prix), but just to make things even more convoluted Ubisoft decided to re-release the game in Europe with yet another title. Now known as Racing Simulation 2: Monaco Grand Prix On-Line, the clue's in the title with this one: it's essentially the exact same game as before but with online multiplayer added. This would be particularly misleading in the UK, where the first version of the game was simply known as Racing Simulation: Monaco Grand Prix, meaning the addition of the 2 to the title may have given the impression it was a proper sequel rather than an updated version of the same game. ■

FACT

Even though the non-online version was known as Racing Simulation: Monaco Grand Prix in the UK, the manual and disc still say Racing Simulation 2, which had to be confusing for some.

RAILROAD TYCOON II

Year 2000
Publisher Gathering of Developers
Developer Tremor Entertainment

IN 1990, SID Meier (who would go on to create the Civilization games) released Railroad Tycoon, a simulation game whose title spoke for itself. Eight years later it got a sequel, and two years after that it came to the Dreamcast. Whereas the PC version of the sequel was played with an isometric viewpoint, the Dreamcast version of Railroad Tycoon II is fully 3D, allowing players to zoom in and rotate the map as they see fit. The game covers the entire history of railroads, from their early inception and the introduction of steam locomotives like Stevenson's Rocket all the way up to modern (and even future) trains. Naturally, the aim is to build a thriving railway while dealing with issues like breakdowns, economic crises and train robberies. ■

FACT

Although its publisher only expected total lifetime sales of 500,000, the PC version alone sold 1.5 million copies by August 2001, mainly thanks to its popularity in Europe.

RAYMAN 2: THE GREAT ESCAPE

Year 2000
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft

THE ORIGINAL RAYMAN was an immensely successful game: according to market research company GfK Chart-Track, it was actually the best-selling PS1 game of all time in the UK (though this may have been down to numerous shops bundling it free with consoles). For the sequel Ubisoft originally planned to stick with the 2D side-scrolling gameplay that had served the original so well, before abandoning the idea and embracing the third dimension instead. Rayman 2 opens with our armless protagonist being held on a prison ship owned by the evil Admiral Razorbeard. After his friend Globox gives him a silver Lum, which gives him some of his powers back, Rayman is able to break free of his cell and start his adventure to free the Glade of Dreams from Razorbeard's occupation. At first Rayman can only fire energy bullets from his hands and spin his hair round like a helicopter to float in the air, but as he proceeds through the game he can gain new abilities, such as the ability to grab onto purple Lums and use them as grapple points. Although Rayman 2 had already been released on N64 and PC the previous year, the Dreamcast version is believed to be generally better visually because some of the textures are improved and some 2D sprites are now 3D models. The Dreamcast version also boasts a Globox Village area, which is home to three mini-games. Although the mini-games were later added to the PS2 port, Globox Village itself remains Dreamcast exclusive to this day. ■

FACT

In a 2016 chat with Double Fine's Tim Schafter, Rayman 2 director Michel Ancel said the Dreamcast version is the best because the texture quality matched the team's original vision.

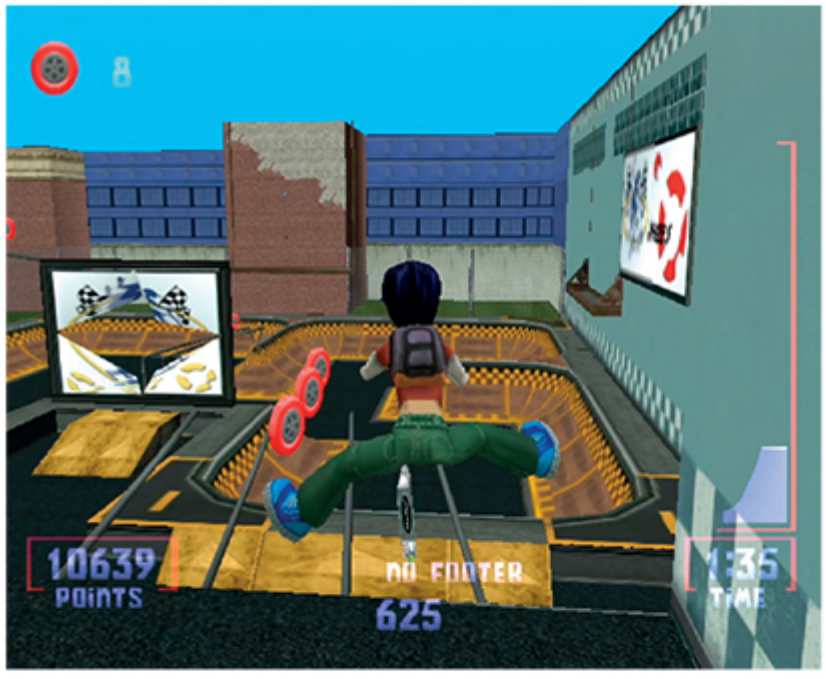
RAZOR FREESTYLE SCOOTER

Year	2001
Publisher	Crave
Developer	Titanium Studios

IF YOU LIKE the idea of the Tony Hawk's Pro Skater games but you wish the skateboards had a big pole with handlebars on the end, Razor Freestyle Scooter may be the game for you. Sponsored by newly founded scooter company Razor USA (except in Europe, where the game's simply called Freestyle Scooter), this is very much a Tony Hawk imitation that appears to be aimed at slightly younger players. It's actually one of the more competent challengers in terms of gameplay: the control system is basically the same as that of Activison's game, and the feel is close enough that Tony Hawk fans could pick it up and start pulling off high scores in next to no time. What arguably lets it down, however, is the fact that there are only three main stages – a skate park, a school and a clock tower – and only two characters to choose from at first. There are some bonus stages designed to improve this: the odd story goes that a robot called Norton has kidnapped your Razor Crew, so by completing objectives in the main stages you can unlock six Sky Fortress stages, which are small obstacle courses where you have to collect a set number of wheels within a minute to rescue them. The odd selection of hidden characters include a giant living sock monkey called Chippie, an anthropomorphic tiki mask and UFC fighter Tito Ortiz (quite why he's part of a scooter gang run by children is beyond me). ■

FACT

Razor was only a year old when the game was released, but over time it's gone on to offer a selection of vehicles including electric scooters, hoverboards, caster boards and tiny electric 'crazy carts'.



RE-VOLT

Year	1999
Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Acclaim Studios London

YOU WOULD THINK a racing game that features small remote-controlled cars would be enough of a sell on its own, but Re-Volt insists on including a strange story too. RC company Toy-Volt's latest batch of cars have gained minds of their own, but instead of driving off to safety to get an education and gain a degree in architecture, they decide to stick to what they know and head out into the real world to take part in a series of races. Naturally, given that the cars are small there's a Micro Machines feel to proceedings here, as tracks take in the likes of a neighbourhood street, a museum, a supermarket, a botanical garden, and even a giant ship called the Toytanic. There are nearly 50 cars in the game, ranging from light F1-style cars and dune buggies to monster trucks, sports cars and the Dreamcast-exclusive 'BossVolt', which wouldn't look out of place in 18-Wheeler American Pro Trucker. In true mini-racing fashion, each race also includes power-ups that can be used, though these are mainly straightforward enough: a firework that homes in on your opponent, an oil slick that sends other cars behind you into a spin, that sort of thing. Speaking of spinning, the game's twitchy handling was one of the most often cited 'negatives', and the cars' dinky nature means even driving off a kerb can completely upend you. Once you get used to the handling and take these seemingly innocuous hazards into account, though, the game comes into its own. ■

FACT

As well as the BossVolt truck, the Dreamcast version also had an exclusive track, set on some rooftops.

READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING

Year 1999
Publisher Midway
Developer Midway Studios San Diego

FOR MANY DAY-ONE adopters of the Dreamcast, the first proper sign that they were dealing with a true next-gen experience wasn't Sonic Adventure or Soulcalibur, but Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: mainly because it was one of the launch games that featured in the Dream On / Generator demo disc bundled in with the console. With its chunky, brilliantly animated characters and its extremely fast 60 frames per second gameplay, Ready 2 Rumble truly felt like an arcade game in the home (even though it was never actually released in arcades).

Midway's take on boxing calls to mind the likes of Nintendo's Punch-Out!! games, given that its roster ditches any notion of realism and instead offers a selection of comedy stereotypes. You've got big-haired former New York cab driver Afro Thunder, questionable Hong Kong martial arts stunt double Jet 'Iron' Chin, time-travelling 1800s fisticuffs pugilist 'Big' Willy Johnson and the gargantuan Boris 'The Bear' Knockimov, who's blatantly supposed to be Dolph Lundgren's Ivan Drago character in Rocky IV. There are even a couple of women in the roster (one of whom, Selene Strike, was designed to look like the lead artist's wife). In all, there are 17 fighters, each packing more animation and character than those in most boxing games before it.

Gameplay is a fast-paced, arcade-style affair, with speedy player movement and lightning-fast jabs. Players can attempt quick

punches that are likely to be too fast to block or dodge, or can try slower, more powerful ones. There's another benefit to attempting the latter: the Rumble meter. Any time you land a powerful hit you'll gain a letter or two of the word 'Rumble'. When you collect all six letters you can hit both triggers to activate Rumble mode. While in this enhanced state, hitting the A and B buttons at the same time performs your Rumble Flurry, an extremely fast and powerful combination of punches that has a good chance of putting your opponent on their backside. Doing so is more important than it is in regular boxing: in Ready 2 Rumble, the default rules dictate that getting knocked down three times in total is an instant defeat, even if the knockdowns take place in different rounds.

As well as an Arcade mode which simply sees you playing through a series of increasingly more difficult opponents, the game also has a more involved Championship mode, which sees you in charge of your own gym and trying to raise three boxers from Bronze class up to Championship level. Taking on prize fights lets you raise money for your gym, which can then be spent on training equipment, five of which come with mini-games designed to improve your boxer. These include aerobics training (which takes the form of a rhythm action mini-game), and sway bag training (where you have to perform a sequence in the right order). It's a welcome mode that brings some much-needed depth to what would otherwise have been a visually impressive but ultimately basic fighting game. ■

FACT

Like some other Midway games, Ready 2 Rumble was rushed for launch with a number of bugs. These were fixed in a re-release which can be identified with a green 'Hot! New!' sticker on the cover.

READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING ROUND 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Midway
Developer	Midway Studios San Diego

A FEW WEEKS after the release of Ready 2 Rumble, the development team received a phone call from a big fan of the game, who wanted to know if he could be included in any potential sequel should there be one in the works. The fan in question happened to be a chap by the name of Michael Jackson: it turned out he was an enormous video game fan, and had been playing his brand new Dreamcast and was in love with Ready 2 Rumble. After picking themselves off the floor the Midway team graciously accepted Jackson's offer to appear in the game (unpaid, it should be stressed), and before long the King of Pop himself was at Midway's San Diego office, working with the team to put his likeness, dance moves and voice (albeit lower than usual) into the game.

Jackson was one of four celebrity fighters added to the second Ready 2 Rumble, but only two of those celebrities actually knew anything about it. The other famous face who was fully aware of their inclusion was basketball legend Shaquille O'Neal, who already had a close relationship with Midway: he'd featured on the cover of the home version of NBA Showtime and was due to be the cover star and provide the motion capture for NBA Hoopz. Shaq, then, also lent his likeness and voice to his in-game character (and, incidentally, is one of the best fighters in the game, given his exceptionally long reach).

FACT

When the Dreamcast's clock hits certain dates, some characters will have alternate costumes. On Christmas Day, for example, Selene Strike wears an elf costume and the ring has a snowman design.

The other two notable names in the game, however, almost certainly had nothing to do with their inclusion. Just two months before he left office, then-US president Bill Clinton was added to the game as a secret unlockable fighter, under the name Mr President. Perhaps more controversially, Hillary Clinton was also added to the game as The First Lady, meaning you could theoretically have husband and wife beating each other up in the ring. You could probably frame it as a way for Hillary to get revenge on her husband's adultery, but in hindsight there was something more than a little off about being able to play as a man who cheated on his wife and add injury to insult by giving her a black eye. Still, Midway got away with it regardless.

In the ring, Ready 2 Rumble Round 2 is more or less the same as its predecessor, although the pace has slowed ever so slightly. The main new mechanic is an evolution of the Rumble meter, which now lets you build it up a total of three times before triggering it. If you can resist the urge and let it fill three times over, you'll activate an even more powerful Rumble Flurry move which has the potential to punch your opponent clean out of the ring, giving you an instant win. In terms of game modes, Arcade and Championship return, and this time are joined by a new Team Battle mode in which players can put together teams of 4–8 boxers and have a series of winner-stays-on bouts until one team runs out of fighters. ■

RECORD OF LODOSS WAR: ADVENT OF CARDICE

Year 2000
Publisher Conspiracy Entertainment
Developer Neverland

THE *RECORD OF Lodoss War* series of fantasy books – and its subsequent anime and manga series – spawned a number of video games in Japan dating back to 1988, but until recently this Dreamcast offering was the only one to be released in the west. It's an action RPG in which the player takes control of an unnamed, formerly killed red-haired hero who's been brought back to life by the oddly-named wizard Wart and tasked with stopping mysterious dark forces who are attempting to awaken Kardis, the ancient Goddess of Destruction.

Your character was once the strongest warrior on Marmo Island, which is why Wart has resurrected you to save the day. No pressure.

Starting off with a pair of boxer shorts and nothing else, you have to arm and dress yourself, leave the cemetery and head off on a lengthy adventure. As in most typical action RPGs, the player gets better by levelling up and finding increasingly more effective gear. The twist, however, is that levelling up only increases your total health. In order to build your other abilities you have to find special plaques that a blacksmith – for the right amount of mithrill – will forge to your weapons, adding buffs to your own personal stats. Although the game was met with generally favourable reviews, it would ultimately be the only Record of Lodoss War game to get an English localisation for the next two decades, with Deedlit in Wonder Labyrinth (on Switch, PS4, Xbox One and PC) finally breaking the curse in 2021. ■

FACT

Mithrill is a fictional currency that was first mentioned by JRR Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*, and has since been adopted by numerous fantasy authors over the years.

RED DOG: SUPERIOR FIREPOWER

Year 2000
Publisher Crave Entertainment
Developer Argonaut Games

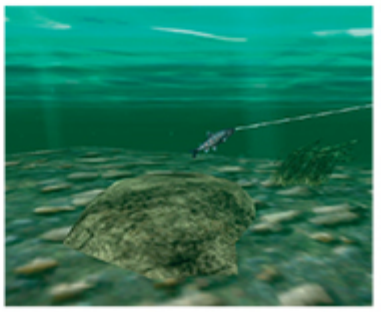
THIS VEHICULAR COMBAT game was developed by Argonaut Games, the studio previously responsible for Star Fox, among other titles. It revolves around a war between Earth and the Haak, an alien race that's agreed to a peace treaty for the past seven years but has now started planning to invade the Earth. As a commander of the Red Dog Tactical Response Team, it's your job to expertly drive your assault vehicle through six lengthy missions, using your built-in cannon to take out enemy Haak forces along the way. As well as the main single-player mode, Red Dog also has extensive multiplayer options for 1–4 players locally, including 15 maps and seven game types including Deathmatch, King of the Hill and Bomb Tag. ■

FACT

Red Dog's lead designer Sefton Hill went on to co-found Rocksteady Studios. He directed all four Batman Arkham games, as well as Suicide Squad: Kill the Justice League.

REEL FISHING: WILD

Year 2001
Publisher Natsume
Developer West One



KNOWN IN JAPAN as Fish Eyes: Wild, this is a freshwater fishing game where players start of at a Japanese mountain stream and can eventually unlock a further 13 bodies of water taking in the likes of North America, Canada (which is apparently different from North America for some reason), Australia, New Zealand, the Pantanal in South America and even the Amazon river. Each area essentially presents the player with a looping full-motion video of the environment, then when you cast your line and it passes near a fish you'll switch to a polygonal 3D underwater view where you can reel in your lure and try to catch any curious nibblers. The game is fully compatible with the Dreamcast Fishing Controller: you'd hope so, to be fair. ■

FACT

There have been more than 15 Reel Fishing games over the years. Most have been western localisations of the Fish Eyes series, but occasionally they've been original Natsume releases.

RESIDENT EVIL 2

Year 1999
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

CHRIS AND JILL may have escaped the Spencer Mansion in the original Resident Evil, but that doesn't mean they stopped Umbrella Corporation's biological weapon, the T-Virus. By the time two months have passed the streets of Raccoon City are swarming with zombies, its townspeople transformed into fumbling flesh-eaters. Our two new protagonists – Claire Redfield (looking for her brother Chris) and Leon Kennedy (a rookie cop expecting to start his first day at the RCPD) – arrive to discover the carnage, meet each other and are promptly separated again by a huge explosion. It's up to Claire and Leon to go of on separate investigations to find out what's going on. The Dreamcast version of Resident Evil 2 may have arrived nearly two years after the PlayStation version, but it included a number of new features to make up for this (some of which were previously seen in the PC port and the PS1 Dual Shock Edition). A new harder difficulty is available from the start for players who want more of a challenge, while for those on the other side of the spectrum there's a Rookie mode which gives you a Gatling gun, submachine gun and rocket launcher, all with infinite bullets, right from the start. There's also a gallery mode where you can see behind-the-scenes concept art for characters and enemies in the game. It's a strong option, then, for those who hadn't already played the PS1 version and were looking to play arguably the best of the original Resi trilogy. ■

FACT

Because it included features from the Dual Shock Edition, the Japanese version has the rather 'discount store' title Biohazard 2 Value Plus.

RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS

Year 2000
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

RESIDENT EVIL 2 may have told us what happened to Chris Redfield after the events of the first game, but what's less clear is the whereabouts of his STARS partner Jill Valentine. This is explained in Resident Evil 3 which straddles the Resi 2 timeline, with a plot that begins the day before it and ends a couple of days after it. Turns out Jill is still in Raccoon City, but the appearance of an enormous new creature called the Nemesis T-Type makes her decide that it's finally time to leave. It's up to Jill to get the hell out of there, while the Nemesis stalks her. It's the inclusion of Nemesis that ensures that of the three games in the initial fixed-camera Resident Evil 'trilogy', the third is perhaps the most suspenseful due to the big creature constantly appearing and essentially triggering a mini boss fight at the most inopportune moments. Much like Resi 2, the Dreamcast version of the third game boasts a bunch of features that are available from the start of the game without having to be unlocked, including a selection of alternate costumes for Jill, another Easy mode which gives you loads of weapons, and The Mercenaries, the action-focused spin-off mode that only appeared in the PlayStation version once the main game was completed. The Dreamcast version also benefits from an increased resolution for some (though not all) of the pre-rendered backgrounds, which combined with the sharper character models makes it look noticeably better than the PS1 game. ■

FACT

Like the second game, the Dreamcast version of Resi 3 lets you see your current health on the VMU instead of having to go to the pause menu.

RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA

Year	2000
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

THERE ARE TWO conflicting stories surrounding Code Veronica's development. One goes that it was originally supposed to be Resident Evil 3 (which is why it stars the second game's protagonist), while PlayStation owners were to get a spinoff starring Jill Valentine. According to this narrative, at some point the PlayStation game was given the Resident Evil 3 title instead, while Code Veronica became the spinoff. Then there's the other story, which claims that this was always supposed to be the spin-off. It's hard to tell exactly which is the true story, but the reality is that whether or not Code Veronica was the original Resident Evil 3, it still plays a lot like the other games in the original trilogy.

The game follows Claire Redfield as she continues to look for her brother Chris. The search takes her to the Umbrella Corporation's Paris headquarters, but Umbrella has been expecting her and she's quickly captured and taken to its prison facility in Rockfort island. Before long, an incident on the island causes all hell to break loose (yet again), meaning Claire and her new chum – the annoyingly-voiced Steve Burnside – have to find a way off the island. Chris turns up later in the game too as he tries to find Claire, but to say any more would shed too much light on what was easily the lengthiest Resident Evil game up to that point.

FACT

A lightgun spin-off on PS2 called Resident Evil Survivor 2 Code: Veronica was released in 2001, and used characters and enemies from the game.

The fact it was released after Resident Evil 3 means Code Veronica serves as an interesting transition point between the original trilogy and what would eventually be accomplished in Resident Evil 4. While the tank-based controls remain and much of the typical Resi gameplay can still be found (including the occasional comically convoluted puzzle), the game does ditch the pre-rendered backgrounds of Resident Evil 1–3, instead introducing proper 3D environments for the first time.

Although it isn't quite ready to switch to a full over-the-shoulder viewpoint like Resi 4 would eventually have, the introduction of a moving camera certainly feels like the first step towards the fourth game's freedom of movement.

Code Veronica is also the last game in the series (at least before the remakes arrived) that made its zombies truly scary. No longer just getting in the way, the zombies in Code Veronica are far more dangerous. Now when you shoot one it has a tendency to fall forwards instead of backwards, making it hard to keep your distance. They can now climb stairs too, while some of them have explosives strapped to them and others (near the end of the game) spit out a T-Virus parasite when you kill them. In all, Code Veronica continues to divide fans, with some considering it the most accomplished old-school entry in the series, and others considering it an unwieldy halfway stage in the series's eventual evolution. Regardless of where your opinion may lie, what can't be argued is that Code Veronica very much matches the production quality of the other main entries in the series: whether it was actually intended to be one or not. ■

REZ

Year	2002
Publisher	Sega
Developer	UGA

SYNESTHESIA IS A neuroscientific term that describes what happens when some people experience an extra sensory reaction on top of the usual one they'd expect when a cognitive pathway is stimulated. Examples include people being able to associate a colour with a sound or a letter of the alphabet, or a certain sound or word making them feel like they're being touched in a specific part of the body. The term 'synesthesia' is often attributed to Rez, but it's a different type of synesthesia, one generally attributed to artists, in which a deliberate effort is made to combine a bunch of different sensations into a single feeling: in this case, synchronising sight, sound and touch to trigger satisfaction.

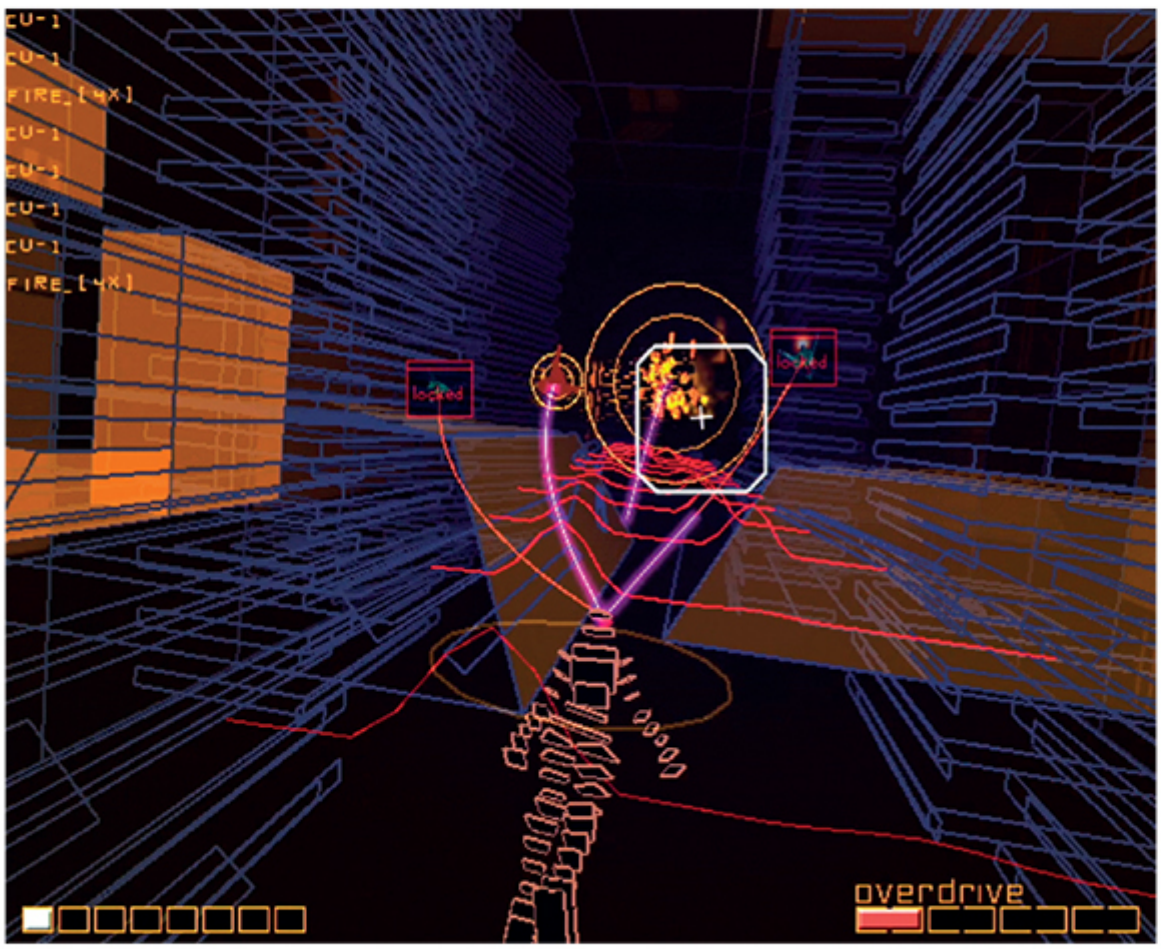
Named after the Underworld electronic dance song of the same name (though Underworld later refused to allow it to be used in the game), Rez is set in the future and tells the story of a supercomputer called the K-Project, which is controlled by an AI called Eden. When Eden is infected with a virus and struggles to cope with the data in the network, she threatens to shut herself down, potentially causing enormous problems. The player hacks into K-Project to find Eden and pull her together, taking on viruses and other ill-meaning cyber nasties along the way.

Gameplay takes the form of an on-rails shooter, with the player soaring through five stages as enemies fly around. The controls are simple: the player moves a cursor with the stick while holding down the A button. Doing this locks onto any enemies the cursor passes over, up to eight in total. Then, when you let go of the A button, all the lock-ons are triggered and the enemies are destroyed. The twist is that – and here's where the synesthesia comes in – the enemies don't blow up the second you release the button, but do it to the beat of the electronic soundtrack. If you've got a Jump Pack plugged into the controller as well, it'll vibrate to the beat of the music too. In this way, the things you see, hear and feel are all synchronised to happen to the same beat, making the whole thing more immersive.

FACT

The PS2 version of the game had an optional accessory called the Trance Vibrator, which could be placed anywhere on the body and vibrated intensely to the beat. Come to your own conclusions: they're correct.

Although the Dreamcast version of Rez was only released in Japan and Europe, the PS2 version got a North American release and the game developed a cult following globally as a result, eventually resulting in HD and virtual reality versions years down the line. While the Dreamcast original may not necessarily be the best way to play the game today, it's a testament to its engaging gameplay, its pulsating soundtrack and its timelessly stylish wireframe visuals that no matter which version you play you're guaranteed an experience unlike anything else. Indeed, the closest we've come since then are Lumines and Tetris Effect, both of which also synchronise the on-screen action with music. Coincidentally (or not), both games were also handled by Tetsuya Mizuguchi, who created Rez. ■



THE RING: TERROR'S REALM

Year	2000
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Asmik Ace Entertainment

IF YOU KNOW your horror movies you'll doubtless be aware of *Ringu* (or its American remake *The Ring*), a psychological horror about a cursed video tape that causes anyone who watches it to die within seven days. In the original Japanese version the tape is the work of Sadako, a young girl who (spoilers) was killed by her father and thrown into a well, but whose vengeful spirit somehow 'recorded' her rage onto the tape, resulting in anyone watching it to peg it a week later when Sadako's ghost climbs out of the well and attacks them. Well, don't get too attached to that plot, because The Ring: Terror's Realm – which is clearly inspired by *Ringu* because it includes footage of the cursed tape lifted directly from the film – is a completely new level of ridiculous.

You play as Meg Rainman, a researcher who's just joined the Center for Disease Control in the US. It turns out Meg's boyfriend Robert was also a CDC worker, until he inconveniently dies of an unknown cause in the game's (incredibly awfully voice acted) opening intro. What's more, three of Robert's CDC colleagues all died on the same day, of the same mysterious circumstances. The only thing connecting them is a piece of software called RING, which was found on all their PCs after they died. Yes, instead of a video tape, Terror's Realm revolves around a cursed computer program. That's not all: by using Robert's PC and running the RING software, Meg

then finds herself in a strange virtual futuristic world in which she's dressed as a commando and is shooting down giant monkey creatures. Which, in case you're wondering, weren't in the film.

To get too much into the plot would be to drive both reader and writer into a spiral of delirium but, long story short, RING is a PC virus created by Sadako, whose body had been recovered from Japan and brought to America so the CDC could research it. The ghost of Sadako's mum also appears at one point to explain that the RING world is actually the real world, and the monsters are other people who have been infected with the virus. Though the word 'explain' is doing a lot of heavy lifting in that last sentence. The whole thing culminates in a boss fight against Sadako, who is now apparently a fully-grown woman who can turn into crows, because why not.

FACT

Sadako returned to the world of video games in 2021, when a far more faithful rendition of her, in her *Ringu* form, was added as a playable monster in Dead by Daylight.

All this madness is confined within the parameters of a slightly clunky survival horror game, where Meg is armed with a selection of weaponry in the RING world but little more than a handgun in the sections where she's exploring the CDC. The game received middling to poor reviews from critics, especially those who weren't familiar with *Ringu* (which was most of them, at that time). If you do know the movie, though, it may still be worth tracking down, if only as a fascinating look at just how much it's possible to deviate from source material. ■

RIPPIN' RIDERS SNOWBOARDING

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer UEP Systems

DEVELOPED BY SNOWBOARDING game veteran UEP Systems, Rippin' Riders (known as Snow Surfers in Europe) has a similar feel to the studio's Cool Boarders series of games. Indeed, the Japanese version of the game is actually called Cool Boarders Burrrn, and had to be renamed in the west: partly because Sony Computer Entertainment owned the western rights to the Cool Boarders name, and partly because we couldn't handle so many R's in a single word. There are seven characters to choose from, each with their own stats, musical preference and comedy stereotype. These range from British metalhead Axel (who shouts 'let's rock and roll baby' before each race) to Bob, who the game awkwardly describes as 'the laughing Rastafarian'. Despite this quirky cast of characters, there isn't actually any racing to be had in Rippin' Riders (at least not against AI opponents). The two single-player options are Free Ride – where you simply have to reach the end of the course within a specific time – and Super Pipe, where you're scored based on tricks you perform. The only actual competitive racing in the game can be found in the Match Race mode, where two players can compete against each other in split-screen local multiplayer. Despite its oddly muted approach, though, UEP's expertise in the Cool Boarders series still shines through in the handling, which initially feels stiff (especially when it comes to stunts) but eventually 'clicks' and becomes quite satisfying, making the idea of beating your own times a lot more palatable. ■

FACT

As the end credits roll, you get to play on the practice course from Cool Boarders 2. If you can rack up a high enough score on this course, you unlock the ability to play as a snowman.

ROADSTERS

Year 2000
Publisher Titus Software
Developer Player 1

THROUGHOUT THE 1990S, French developer and publisher Titus Interactive had gained a reputation for being experts in the field of racing games, thanks to the likes of the Crazy Cars series and its Lamborghini games on the SNES and Nintendo 64. This reputation was arguably dented a little when Titus turned to Californian developer Player 1, which promptly delivered two less-than-stellar racing games for the Dreamcast. The second was Exhibition of Speed, which is covered earlier in this book, but before that it handled the Dreamcast port of Roadsters, a game that had been previously developed by Titus itself for the Nintendo 64 and had been met with a relatively positive response. The Dreamcast version wasn't a straight conversion, as Player 1 decided to 'enhance' the game's eight tracks by adding natural disasters to the equations. The Docklands track, for example, now has a plane crashing onto the circuit, wrecking some of the scenery. On paper it's a welcome addition, but the addition of these disasters was accompanied by what were generally considered to be self-made disasters: namely the graphics and the handling. While the N64 version of Roadsters was generally given the nod for doing the best it could with the resources available to it, the Dreamcast version doesn't look significantly better, meaning it looks like one of the less impressive racing games on the system. Add to this some extremely sensitive handling, and you've got a rare example of a game that was considered by critics to be better in its previous-gen incarnation. ■

FACT

The now-defunct Player 1 is not to be confused with Player 1 Games, another California studio which is alive and well at the time off writing and responsible for mobile games like Mathletix. So don't worry, Mathletes.

SAMBA DE AMIGO

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sonic Team

PLAYSTATION GAME PARAPPA the Rapper is often credited as being the first major example of the rhythm action genre. By the time the Dreamcast arrived a few years later the genre was in full swing, particularly in Japan where arcades were overflowing with all manner of rhythm games, many of which boasted oversized novelty peripherals designed to make the experience even more entertaining (examples included GuitarFreaks, Pop'n Music and DrumMania). Among these was Samba de Amigo, an outrageously colourful game released in 1999 that required players to shake a pair of maracas to the beat. When the game was ported to the Dreamcast just a few months later, the maracas made the journey too, making this one of the most expensive but most unique titles on the console.

The Dreamcast version's main mode is Arcade, which acts exactly like the coin-op and gives you six tracks to choose from, including the likes of Samba de Janeiro, Tubthumping by Chumbawamba and a ska cover of A-Ha's 'Take on Me'. After choosing a song the game begins, with the main interface showing the game's cheery monkey mascot Amigo surrounded by six circular icons. These represent positions for the maracas, with high, low and waist height icons for each hand. As the music plays, little blue dots start moving towards the circles. As they pass you have to shake your maraca in that direction, and that's all there is to it. The idea is that by the time you're playing on the harder difficulty levels you'll be shaking your maracas like crazy and properly contributing to the song's percussion. If you aren't the arm-waving type (or can't be bothered with the rigmarole of setting up the controllers, which involves siting a two-foot sensor bar on the floor), you can play the game with a standard Dreamcast controller instead, though of course the novelty factor is diminished somewhat when you do this.

FACT

The Japanese version doesn't include Ricky Martin's 'Cup of Life' or 'Livin' La Vida Loca'. It does, however, have two songs – 'Mas Que Nada' and 'El Mambo' – which aren't in the western release.

Although there are only six tracks to choose from at first, the player can unlock more through gameplay, with the total reaching 14 songs, including such legendary ditties as Ricky Martin's 'Livin' la Vida Loca' and 'Soul Bossa Nova' (aka the theme from *Austin Powers*, just in case the game didn't feel 1999 enough). That wasn't all, though: on a weekly basis, players could connect their Dreamcast online and 'download' a new track, adding an extra nine songs to the playlist. Given the extremely slow download speeds of the Dreamcast's dial-up modem, these weren't actual downloadable content as such: instead, the player was merely downloading a tiny 'key' that unlocked songs which were already on the disc. These download songs were taken from other Sega games, meaning players could shake their maracas to the likes of 'You Can Do Anything' from Sonic CD, 'Super Sonic Racing' from Sonic R, 'Magical Sound Shower' from Out Run and the theme from Afterburner. Of course, these can no longer be downloaded so these days you'll need to use a homebrew disc like VMU Tool to copy them to your VMU. ■

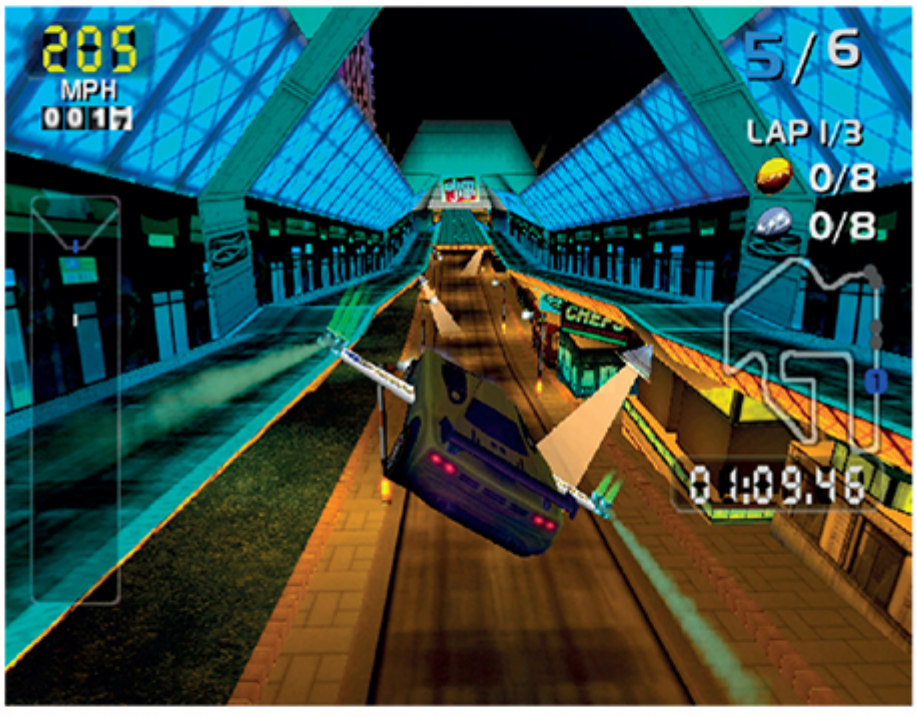
SAN FRANCISCO RUSH 2049

Year 2000
Publisher Midway Games
Developer Midway Games West

THE RUSH SERIES of racing games offers typical arcade-style vehicular competition set in American locations. The original game, San Francisco Rush, hit arcades in late 1996, and its sequel Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA took the action nationwide in 1998. For the third game, released in arcades in 1999, it was decided to bring the series back to San Francisco, but with a twist: it would be a San Francisco set 50 years in the future. This is actually more restrained than you may think: if you're picturing robots in flying cars injecting microchips into their eyeballs then, firstly, what is wrong with you, and secondly, that's not the case. Instead, other than the presence of some slightly futuristic-looking buildings and a little more neon than you'd usually expect in the city night track, the game actually feels like a relatively safe prediction of what the year 2049 may look like (if anything, it may not look advanced enough: let me know if you're reading this 26 years after this book is published). The one major addition that does feel suitably sci-fi is the ability to extend wings out of the sides of your car while you're in mid air: this means that any time you hit one of the game's trademark ridiculous high jumps, you can pop the wings out and adjust your positioning so you can land properly (or, more likely, spin around wildly and explode into a wall). ■

FACT

The Dreamcast and N64 versions had a completely different soundtrack to the arcade game, composed by Scottish legend Barry Leitch (best known for the excellent Top Gear game soundtracks).



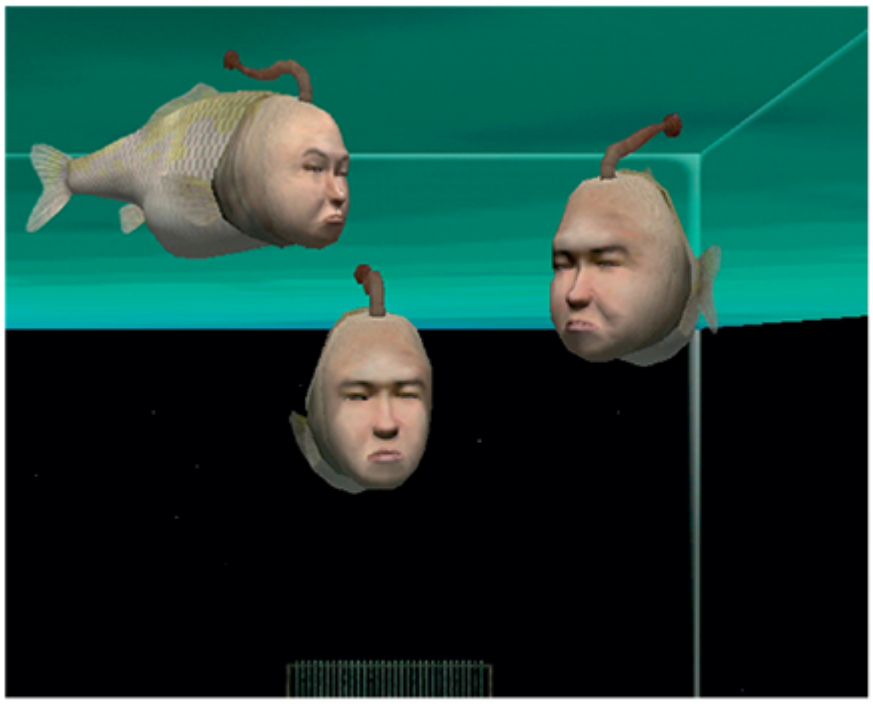
SEAMAN

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Vivarium

ASK DREAMCAST FANS to name some of the console's quirkier games and as long as they've heard of Seaman it'll almost certainly appear near the top of their list. The idea of a game where you take care of a fish may not seem that odd, but when you consider this fish has a human face and its actions are narrated by Mr Spock that's where things perhaps get a little unnatural. What's more, Seaman is played almost entirely with the Dreamcast Microphone, which plugs into the controller and lets you talk to Seaman directly. Starting off with a group of small parasites called Mushroomers, the player has to direct these to a shelled creature called a Nautilus and watch as the parasites eat it from the inside, eventually breaking free in their new form, the Gillman. This is the most well-known form in the game – a fish with a human face, voiced by Deadly Premonition's Jeff Kramer – and it's here where you can start communicating with your Gillman, which initially speaks gibberish in a baby voice but over time starts forming full sentences and then, eventually, deep philosophical questions. The aim is to further evolve multiple Gillmen then breed them and evolve their offspring until you eventually get a Frogman, a legged creature that can live in both water and land. What Seaman lacks in execution – the voice recognition is limited and isn't entirely accurate – it certainly has in originality and sheer bizarre charm, meaning its cult status was all but guaranteed from day one. ■

FACT

Seaman was originally planned for the N64's disk-based add-on, the 64DD. Creator Yoot Saito says Shigeru Miyamotyo, who liked his concept, was an important part of the game's development.



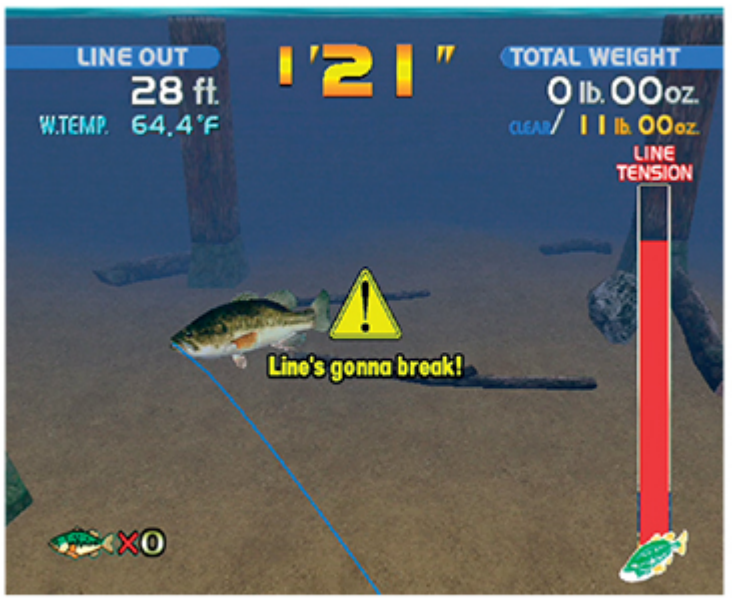
SEGA BASS FISHING

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sims

YOU MAY NOT immediately associate the slow-paced, relaxing vibe of fishing with the high-speed, short-burst world of arcade games, but Sega brought the two together in 1997 when it released Sega Bass Fishing in arcades. The combination was unexpectedly successful, and Sega would eventually bring the game to the Dreamcast a couple of years later, along with one of the most iconic video game accessories ever made: the Sega Dreamcast Fishing Controller.

This rod-shaped gizmo consists of an analogue stick and four face buttons much like a standard Dreamcast controller, but also has motion sensing capabilities and, crucially, a fishing reel attached to the side. This reel is used to slowly move your lure through water, but when you get a bite (accompanied by the controller vibrating), you have to start quickly reeling it in. The motion sensing comes into play when the fish starts fighting to escape: by tilting your rod in the directions the game prompts you to, you can keep the fish under control and avoid breaking the line. While it's perfectly possible to play Sega Bass Fishing with a standard Dreamcast controller, there's really nothing like using the Fishing Controller: that said, of course, this was during an era before the Wii, so the novelty of motion controls is somewhat less impactful these days.

As for the game itself, Sega Bass Fishing includes an Arcade and Original mode. Arcade

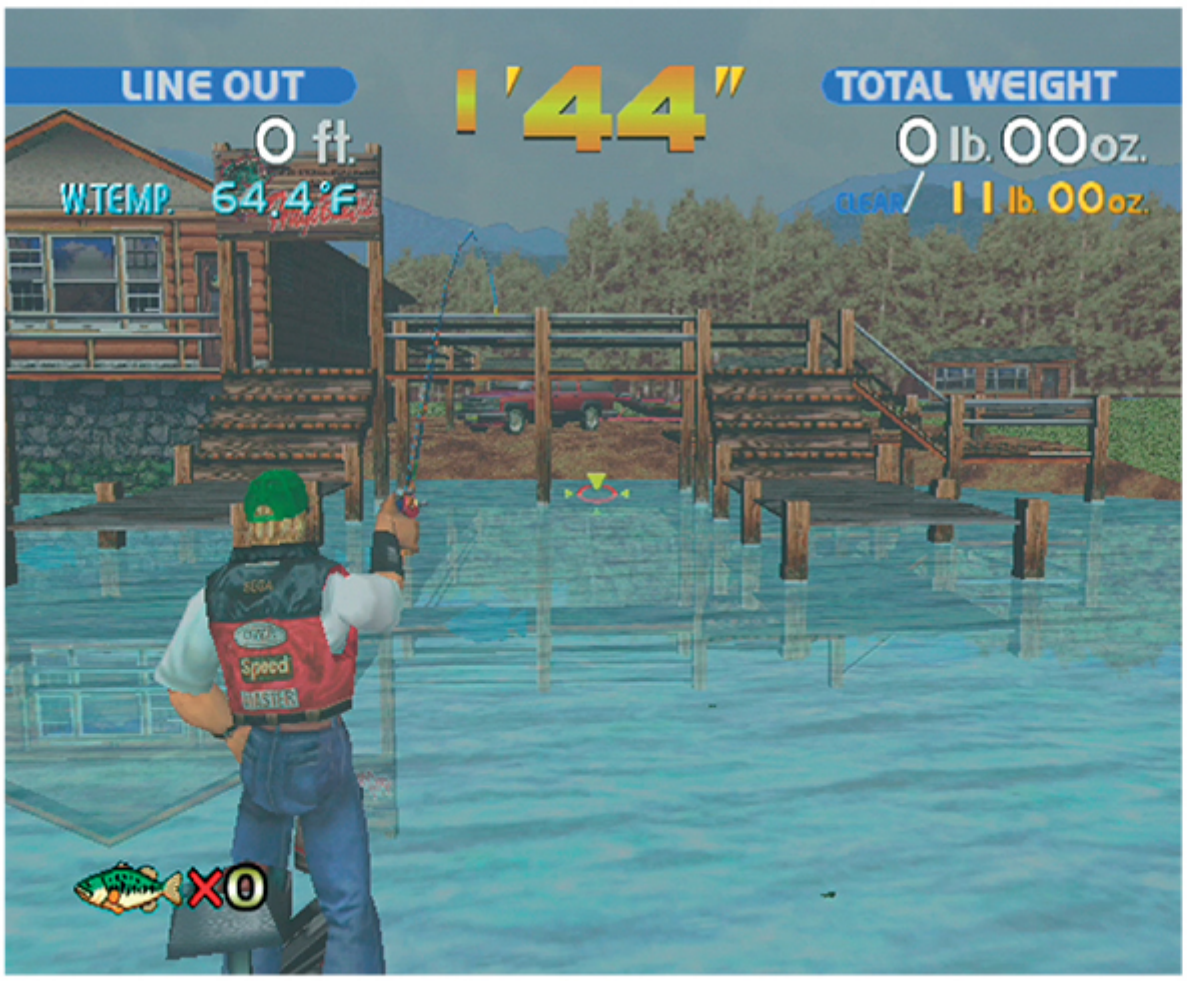


is, naturally, based on the coin-op version of the game and has you trying to catch bass against a strict time limit. Each stage specifies a target total weight, and you have to clear this target before the time runs out to move onto the next one: it may therefore be a little quicker to catch smaller fish, but sometimes taking the extra time to catch larger ones pays off in the long run. Although the timer is quite strict, you get bonus time for successfully landing a fish, and can even gain some extra bonus seconds by hitting the fish off scenery as you reel it in. That's not a joke, that's an actual thing. You also get a handful of lures to choose from, with the game advising on how to use each one. Some require you to continually reel them to look believable (to a fish, at least), others need you to move a bit, stop a bit, wiggle around every now and then. If you've ever tried wooing a potential partner in a nightclub you get the idea.

While the Arcade mode is pretty fast-paced, the Original mode tries to slow things down a little. Here you're an amateur angler signed up with the Sega Bass Fishing Association, and have to become a world champion angler by taking part in a series of tournaments, each with their own rules and regulations. By performing well in these tournaments and making sure you still manage to hit regulation targets along the way, you'll eventually become King of the Fish, a title that's definitely in the game. Okay, it isn't. ■

FACT

Peripheral manufacturer InterAct made a third-party Fishing Controller alternative called the Fission Controller (geddit?). Some say it's actually better than the official one because it makes a sound when you reel it.



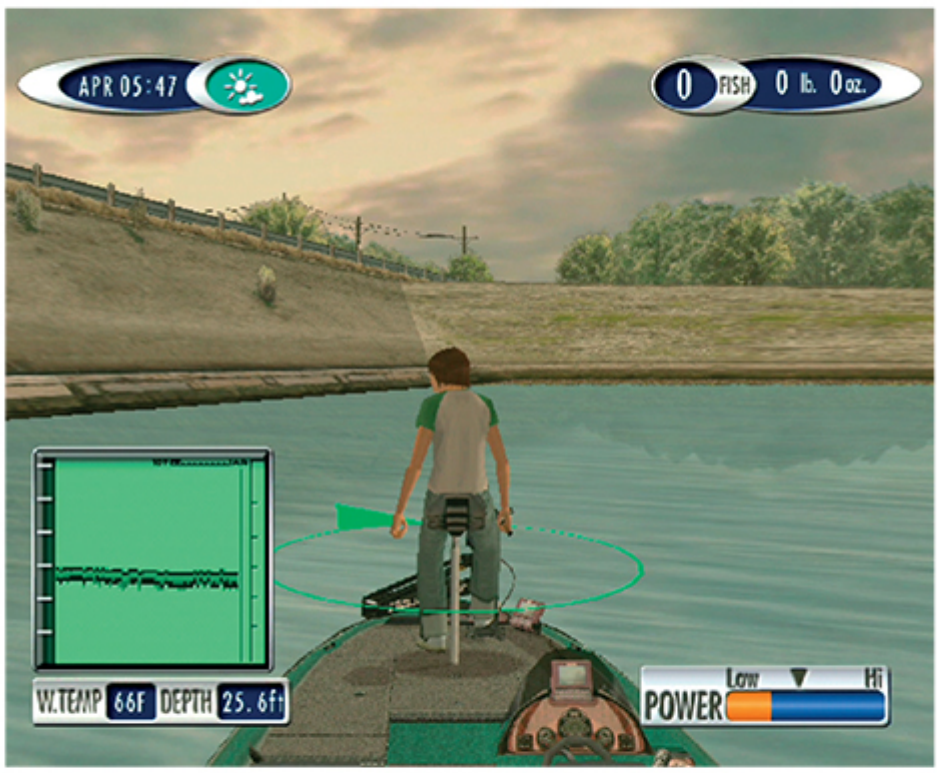
SEGA BASS FISHING 2

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Wow Entertainment

EVERYONE WHO FISHES for bass knows you can't just keep fishing in the one area your entire life (or at least, they would if I hadn't just made that up) so Sega released a sequel to give a bit of variety to players who had already thoroughly rinsed everything the first Sega Bass Fishing had to offer. With no arcade mode to draw inspiration from this time, Sega Bass Fishing 2 is instead a somewhat more realistic affair, at least in that it's played at a much slower pace. One of the main changes this time is that your angler has finally found the keys to their boat: whereas in the first game you stayed firmly put in one place and simply turned left and right to decide where to cast your line, this time you can actually drive your boat around and use a radar to check for areas of bassy activity to help you decide where to fish. The lack of an arcade-style timer also means the fish in Sega Bass Fishing 2 are far less eager to bite your lure, meaning the sequel feels very different to play because you have to be a lot more patient. As well as a selection of different characters to choose from – each with their own unique ratings for casting distance, casting accuracy, retrieving speed, sight, fighting technique and retrieving technique – there are also 100 lures to unlock and collect, which is frankly more lures than anyone should really need. ■

FACT

Sega would go on to release Sega Bass Fishing Duel on the PS2, which lets two players compete with each other to find out who the best angler is.



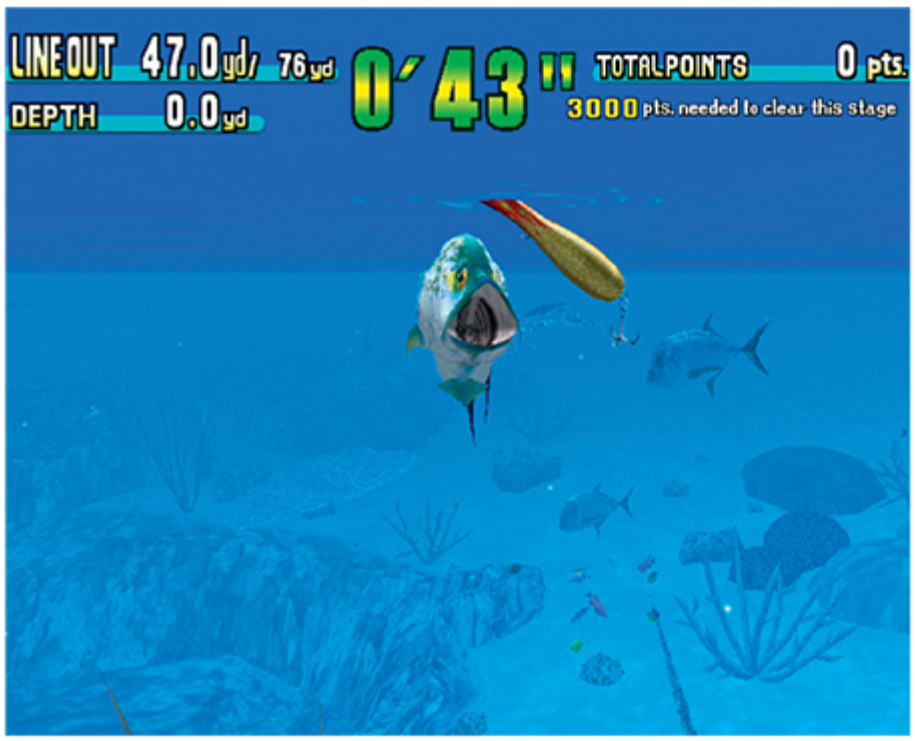
SEGA MARINE FISHING

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Wow Entertainment

YOU MAY NOT have known it given how many fishing video games focus solely on it, but not every fishing enthusiast is, to quote one-hit-wonder Meghan Trainor, 'all about that bass'. It turns out there's actually more than one species of fish, and that's where Sega Marine Fishing comes into play. Much like Prince's 'When Doves Cry', there's no bass at all in this one: instead, there are 15 other species of fish (and a few hidden ones) to catch across the game's five stages. Tuna, trevallies, sailfish, blue marlins and even stingrays and barracuda can be caught this time, making things far more varied. The introduction of multiple species also affects the way the game is played, because the lure you choose is even more important now. Your 'Deep Diver Minnow' lure may attract skipjack tuna, but a Napoleon fish won't want to know anything about it and will need to be tempted by a Big Pencil Popper or Lipless Minnow instead. Whereas Sega Bass Fishing 2 would be a slower paced game, Sega Marine Fishing instead leans heavier into the arcade side of things, keeping the Arcade mode and ditching the tournament structure of the Original mode. Instead, Original consists of a bunch of mini-games designed to improve your ability to choose the right lure, make it behave properly, target heavier fish and the like. It also has a Free Fishing mode: some of the fish you catch here come with bonus items which can be added to your own personal aquarium. ■

FACT

The hidden fish include bluefish tuna, hammerhead sharks and the hardest fish to catch in the game, coelacanths.



SEGA EXTREME SPORTS

Year 2000
Publisher Sega / Infogrames
Developer Innerloop

DESPITE THE NAME, Sega Extreme Sports wasn't really developed with Sega's close involvement (indeed, the North American release is simply called Xtreme Sports). Developed by Norwegian studio Innerloop, the game was originally designed for Dreamcast and PC – not Nintendo 64, as is often inaccurately claimed online – using the technology created for its previous PC flight simulator Joint Strike Fighter. Infogrames published the game in North America, while Sega took over for the Japanese and European releases, applying its Sega Sports branding and adding new outfits created by Italian fashion company 55DSL (a now defunct spin-off of Diesel).

Sega Extreme Sports is a racing game where, as is ever the case, the aim is to reach the finish line before any of your opponents. The twist here is that each race is actually a multi-discipline affair, where in order to get to the goal you're going to have to take on a selection of different vehicles, all of which are naturally extreme enough to meet the title's remit. There are six vehicles in the game, each of which handles rather differently. The ATV is used for driving along bumpy terrain, with plenty of jumps that have to be approached at the right angle. The snowboard is (obviously) used for snowy slopes, and is the easiest vehicle on which to perform tricks and top up your boost meter. The mountain bike is designed for cross-country racing, but comes with a fatigue meter meaning you need to watch your energy as you race. Sky surfing involves using a hang glider to fly between markers and through rings. Base jumping (or speed gliding, as the manual puts it) is a simple parachute jump where you position yourself in the air as you fall then try to apply your chute as close to the ground as possible. Finally, there's bungee jumping, which is the least interactive of the events but also the most frustrating, as failing the single task – pressing the A button at the very bottom of the jump to grab a metal bar and pull yourself to the ground – sends you flying back up into the air, no doubt causing you to drop well behind your AI opponents.

FACT

Extreme Sports was released on PC in 2001. The US version was renamed Maximum Sports Extreme, while the newly-sponsored European version was titled Pepsi Max Extreme Sports.

Each of the game's courses, then – which take in the likes of Mount Kilimanjaro, Maui, the Himalayas and Scotland (which is your stereotypical castle ruins and fields with sheep in them) – consist of a number of different phases, each making you use a different vehicle. The trick isn't just in getting to the front of the pack and staying there (which in itself is no mean feat because this is a difficult game), but also being able to switch vehicles as seamlessly as possible: if you don't position yourself close enough to the next one when you get off, you could lose valuable seconds running over to it, and if you find yourself ending up out-of-bounds (such as when landing in a sky surfing phase) you could be outright disqualified. It's an interesting idea, but these transition sections can prove frustrating. ■

SEGA GT

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Wow Entertainment / Tose

EVERY NOW AND then, a console gets an exclusive game that's so spectacular it doesn't just stand as a high quality title, but a revolutionary release that completely redefines a genre. That's what PlayStation owners got with Gran Turismo when it was released in 1997, leaving other console manufacturers to wonder how they could possibly compete with such a groundbreaking shake-up of the racing genre. Sega had a crack at it with Sega GT (known in Japan by the objectively worse name Sega GT: Homologation Special), an attempt at a similarly 'serious' racing game that focused on realistic handling, tuning and car collection.

There are 141 cars in the game – a large number at the time, bettered only by PlayStation's offering – mostly consisting of Japanese and North American manufacturers including the likes of Honda, Toyota, Subaru, Nissan, Ford and Dodge. In one of those rare examples of the PAL version being better, when the game came to Europe these had been joined by a further helping of cars from European manufacturers including Fiat, Audi, Mercedes-Benz, Peugeot, Alfa Romeo and Renault, bringing the total number up to more than 180. There are also 22 (fictional) tracks to choose from, ranging from typical racing circuits to street races, with the occasional night race thrown in to mix things up a bit.

While players can take on a single race or a time trial, the game's main meat is its Championship mode. As in Gran Turismo, players

start off with a modest amount of money which is just about enough to buy an old banger (relatively speaking), and then use this first car to start entering races, with the aim obviously being to earn enough money to eventually buy better cars and upgrade your existing ones. Also similar to Sony's game is the need to pass a licence test before being allowed to take part in some competitions, but rather than the lengthy, drawn-out process in Gran Turismo which saw the player taking on what was essentially a glamorised tutorial, here gaining a licence is as simple as trying to clear a set lap time on a single course.

You can either buy a full-price car from the showroom or take your chances in the used market to get a cheaper car that may not necessarily be the exact model or colour you may be looking for. Alternatively, once you've got a bit of extra cash in your pocket, you can go all-out and get your own custom car built from scratch, choosing from a selection of body and tuning parts (Sega claimed there are over 2 million possible combinations here). Ultimately, while the game didn't come anywhere close to achieving the same level of popularity as Gran Turismo, and while it didn't offer online multiplayer (which could have given it that unique selling point to give it the edge), those who bought Sega GT were nevertheless generally happy with what was technically one of Sega's final attempts to challenge Sony. ■

FACT

When the Dreamcast died and Sega left the console business, it made two sequels for the Xbox titled Sega GT 2002 and Sega GT Online, before ending the series.

SEGA RALLY 2

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega AM3

WHEN THE SEGA Saturn was surprise-launched in North America in May 1995, it's argued that one of the numerous reasons it got off to a bad start against the PlayStation was because it lost the battle of the arcade racer ports. While the PlayStation version of Namco's Ridge Racer was a solid enough conversion of the more powerful coin-op source material, the Saturn port of Daytona USA was severely cut down and looked noticeably less impressive. Given that both games formed many western players' first impressions of each system, it was a painful, early blow to the Saturn's reputation and it struggled from that point on. Sega was keen to make sure the same thing didn't happen again with the Dreamcast, which is likely why Sega Rally 2 was a far more respectable home version of what was at the time one of the most popular arcade machines around.

While the original Sega Rally boasted three cars – the Lancia Delta, Lancia Stratos and Toyota Celica GT4 – this was significantly increased for Sega Rally 2, especially on Dreamcast. The arcade version features eight cars, but on Dreamcast this is expanded to more than 20, covering such manufacturers as Peugeot, Ford, Subaru, Renault, Fiat and Mitsubishi. The number of courses was also greatly increased, from four in the first Sega Rally to 17 in the Dreamcast sequel.

As in its predecessor, Sega Rally 2 obviously focuses more on off-road driving than your conventional asphalt-based racing game. You'll be

powersliding your car over sand, gravel, mud and even snow in some stages, meaning the handling is naturally slippier than it is in most other racers. Once players get used to the game's more unique handling, then, and get used to drifting round corners, the result is one of the most satisfying racing games of its era. Naturally, had it been a straight port of the arcade game then Sega Rally 2 could have been in danger of lacking longevity, given that coin-ops are designed with short bursts of play in mind. While the Dreamcast version does still retain an Arcade mode which replicates the coin-op experience, it also adds a new mode called 10 Year Championship which gives the game some much-needed depth. This is essentially 10 different takes on Arcade mode, with different tracks, weather conditions and times of day each time. If you can finish in first place each year you'll unlock a new car (which is one of the reasons the Dreamcast version has so many more vehicles than the arcade one).

FACT

If you want a stable frame rate but don't want to lose any detail, pressing Up instead of Down at the end of the 60fps code keeps all the detail and gives you a locked 30fps instead.

The main thing the Dreamcast port was criticised for was its frame rate. While the arcade version of Sega Rally 2 runs at 60 frames per second, the Dreamcast version aims for that but usually comes nowhere close (especially in the Japanese version, which was released first and is less optimised). There is, however, a secret '60fps' code to remedy this: by entering Up, A, Down, Down, Left, Right, B, B, Down on the title screen the game would remove some scenery and effects (like water splashes) to provide a more stable 60fps performance. ■

SEGA SMASH PACK VOL 1

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

SEGA HAS NEVER been a stranger to re-releasing its classic games in compilations, and the Sega Smash Pack is no different. It's an odd mish-mash: there are 10 Mega Drive / Genesis games in here (Altered Beast, Columns, Golden Axe, Phantasy Star II, The Revenge of Shinobi, Shining Force, Sonic, Streets of Rage 2, Vectorman and Wrestle War), as well as Sega Swirl (look right) and, oddly, a brand new port of the PC version of Virtua Cop 2. It's probably just worth getting the game for this, because as welcome as retro compilations always are, Smash Pack was heavily criticised for its Mega Drive emulation. This was mainly because its recreation of the game's audio was way off, often sounding nothing like the cartridge originals. ■

FACT

Programmer Gary Lake left a text file on the disc telling people how to use the emulator for other games, adding: 'Don't forget to pay your respects to Uncle Sonic. Sony just doesn't get it.'

SEGA SWIRL

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Tremor Entertainment

THIS BASIC PUZZLE game was created by Sega programmer Scott Hawkins and was originally released as a small PC title, before it was ported to the Dreamcast and made available through a number of sources. You may have seen games like it before: you're given a screen full of coloured swirls, and if you select one you'll remove not only it, but all the other swirls of the same colour that are touching it. The more swirls you remove with a single action, the more points you get, but if you're forced to remove a swirl on its own you'll lose points. As well as being included in the Sega Smash Pack, Sega Swirl was also included on the demo discs bundled with the *Official Dreamcast Magazine* in the UK and US. ■

FACT

Sega Swirl got a sequel (called Sega Swirl 2), which was only released on PC and could only be played on the now-defunct GameTap subscription service.

SEGA WORLDWIDE SOCCER 2000

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Silicon Dreams

THE FIRST GAME in Sega's Worldwide Soccer series was released on the Saturn in 1995, as a westernised port of its Japanese title Victory Goal. The game saw a few more entries on the Saturn before making the jump to Dreamcast, at which point Sega decided it would no longer handle development itself. Instead, the series was handed over to Silicon Dreams, the UK studio previously responsible for Olympic Soccer and Michael Owen's World League Soccer on the PlayStation (among others). The resulting revamp is a reasonable enough football game featuring 150 teams across the American, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Scottish and Spanish leagues, plus a further 45 international teams. Although the Scottish and English teams have real player names (well, mostly: Henrik Larsson is misspelt as Larrson), the other leagues don't. That said, Silicon Dreams was clever enough to make the fake names sound like the real ones – Ronalldoe, Maldeeny and so on – so that commentator Trevor Brooking could still read them out as normal. Anyone familiar with the Michael Owen games (see the *N64 Encyclopedia* for a more detailed summary of one of them) will quickly note that Sega Worldwide Soccer 2000 borrows heavily from its sibling, particularly when it comes to the menus. Still, controls are relatively solid and ball handling is satisfying enough. The one main issue reported by critics at the time, however, was that the game's performance was far from stable, with extreme slowdown during busier moments, which in a football game is most of the time. ■

FACT

Silicon Dreams would go on to make a Lego-based football game called Football Mania on PS2, before being liquidated in 2003.

SEGA WORLDWIDE SOCCER 2000 EURO EDITION

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Silicon Dreams

RELEASED JUST FIVE months after Sega Worldwide Soccer 2000, the Euro Edition was designed to capitalise on the Euro 2000 tournament. As such, it's more of an update than a sequel, with the addition of a few international European teams who weren't in the previous version bringing the total number of teams up from 195 to 203. Even the American and Japanese leagues are still intact, despite not being massively well-known for their level of European-ness. Elsewhere, the other main additions are the ability to choose your difficulty (which was missing before) and a new speed setting, which fixes its predecessor's main problem. Other than that, it's business as usual: you only really need to own one of these two games, and it should be this one. ■

SEVENTH CROSS EVOLUTION

Year 1998
Publisher UFO Interactive Games
Developer HuneX

THIS ODD GAME starts you off as a tiny blob. Unable to do much, you have to swim around and eat other small organisms until you evolve to your fourth stage, called 'Origin'. At this point you develop the ability to perform very basic attacks but are still basically prey for almost every other creature. The aim is to eat as much food as you can while avoiding being eaten yourself, and using the nutrients from the food you eat to evolve body parts. These can be evolved at different rates and into different things, so by the end of the game you may have a monkey's head, lobster arms, the body of a 'laser horse' and human legs. Finally: a game that represents me. ■

FACT

The evolution system is known as the SOM (Self-Organisation Map), and was described by the game's producer as 'a form of neuro-technology that is too heavy for the Saturn to handle'. Right.

SHADOW MAN

Year 1999
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Acclaim Studios Teesside

SPARE A THOUGHT for Michael LeRoi, who's destined to never have a normal day. As the Shadow Man, he's the latest in a line of voodoo warriors whose aim is to protect the world of the living (known as Liveside) from any evil forces who may fancy crossing over from the world of the dead (fittingly named Deadside). Now he's up against a biggie: Legion is a chap who plans to create an immortal army of damned warriors and trigger the apocalypse. To do this he's recruited five of the world's worst serial killers – known as The Five, as if they were a boyband – who are all now hiding out in Liveside. LeRoi has to find and defeat The Five to remove the dark souls within them, but there's just once catch: while The Five can only be harmed by his Shadow Man powers, he's only Shadow Man when he's in Deadside. He has to figure out a way, then, to bring his powers to Liveside and stop the potential end of existence. The game is a straightforward third-person action adventure which takes place over a number of suitably gloomy environments, from the Louisiana swamplands to a New York tenement, a Texas prison and an asylum. In Liveside, LeRoi can attack enemies with typical weaponry like a handgun, a shotgun or an Uzi. In Deadside, however, he attacks wraiths, gargoyles and the like with more powerful voodoo weapons like his trusty Shadowgun, the razor-firing 'Violator' and the Asson, a voodoo rattle with a skull on the end that shoots fireballs. ■

FACT

According to a 1999 report in New York newspaper *Newsday*, Shadow Man cost around $6 million to develop, compared to $1 million to $2 million of most triple-A games at the time.

SHENMUE

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega AM2

FEW GAMES IN history have been as ambitious as Shenmue. Yu Suzuki's open-world RPG feels like the video game equivalent of the Beatles' music, in that it may not seem revolutionary when you play it all these years later, but that's only because countless others have adopted and imitated its innovations in the decades that have followed. Originally designed to be a role-playing spin-off of his Virtua Fighter series, Suzuki instead decided to make Shenmue a brand new adventure, one that would ultimately make a huge impact on the gaming landscape.

Set in 1986, the game follows Ryo Hazuki, a teenage martial arts student who returns home one day to find his father being confronted by a mysterious Chinese chap called Lan Di. It turns out Lan Di is looking for an artefact called the Dragon Mirror, and threatens to kill Ryo unless his old man hands it over. After revealing where the mirror is located, Ryo's dad is then killed while Ryo watches on helplessly. It's up to Ryo to find out what Lan Di wanted with the mirror, track him down and avenge his old man's death, and it's an adventure that starts in the most deliberately patient way possible: wandering round his hometown, asking if anyone knows anything.

Shenmue's strength lies in the game's decision to not give players an enormous, sprawling world to explore, but to instead focus much of its gameplay around a relatively small environment – Ryo's tiny village of Yamanose and its connecting town Dobuita – and pack it with as much detail as possible. As a result, Shenmue offered players more interactivity than most games did at the time, with Ryo able to enter many of the shops in Dobuita, engage with almost every townsperson he comes across, and use many of the conveniences and amenities dotted around the town. Got some spare change? Use the capsule machines to try and collect the full set of Sega figurines, head to the drinks machine and buy a can of cola, or even walk to the You Arcade and play vintage Sega titles Hang-On and Space Harrier (both of which were designed by Suzuki in his early days at Sega).

FACT

A Sega Saturn can be found in Ryo's house, in a cupboard under his TV. This is despite the fact the game is set in 1986, eight years before the Saturn was released.

The game also reintroduced and popularised the quick-time event, and was actually the one to coin that term (though they were dubbed 'quick timer events' instead). Although the idea of pressing buttons as prompts appear on-screen was far from original – numerous FMV games on systems like the Mega CD consisted entirely of them – Suzuki's decision to integrate them seamlessly into cutscenes kept players on their toes and ensured QTEs would be used in countless third-person adventure games to follow.

Despite launching to enormous critical success and being heralded as a new dawn for adventure games, Shenmue is considered a commercial flop. The game's exceptionally expensive development – different claims say it cost between $47–70 million – meant that even though it was one of the best-selling Dreamcast games, the console's failure meant this still only amounted to around 1.2 million copies. ■

SHENMUE II

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega AM2

YU SUZUKI HAD always planned for Shenmue to be a multi-part series, which is why the first game only really tells the first chapter of Ryo's story, ending on a fairly obvious 'To be Continued' note. This would have all been well and good had the Dreamcast been a successful console, but its hasty demise meant that by the time the second part was ready, Sega was already looking towards its future as a third-party software developer for other consoles. As such, Shenmue II was only released on the Dreamcast in Japan and Europe, with Sega giving Microsoft an exclusivity deal in North America, meaning fans in that region would need to buy the Xbox to continue Ryo's adventure.

Without wishing to spoil too much (in case you plan on playing through the first game), Shenmue II opens with Ryo arriving in Hong Kong as he continues his search for Lan Di. The story this time is much longer and splits into three distinct parts: the first has Ryo asking around for more information on Lan Di, similar to how the first game opens. Then Ryo heads off to Kowloon to find someone who had attempted to warn his father about the planned attack. Finally, the game's third chapter takes place in Guilin in China, where Ryo learns more about his dad's mirror before everything culminates in a cliffhanger.

Shenmue II plays similarly to the first game, with the odd minor quality of life improvement here and there (such as the option to move with the analogue stick instead of the D-Pad). Anyone who had already played through the first Shenmue could load their completed save file into Shenmue II, allowing them to continue with the same money and items Ryo had at the end of the previous game. That's not to say it's a seamless experience, however: the European version doesn't have the first game's (often comically bad) English language voice acting, instead only giving players a Japanese dub with subtitles. The Xbox version released the following year would get an English dub, so if you absolutely refused to hear Ryo speaking in his native tongue that was the version to get. Incidentally, the Xbox version also included a DVD called Shenmue: The Movie, which was just cutscenes from the first game filling players in on the story.

FACT

Technically, Shenmue tells Chapter 1 of Ryo's story, and Shenmue II tells Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Chapter 2 was released as a comic book, and details Ryo's trip from Yokosuka to Hong Kong.

Ultimately, the circumstances surrounding the Dreamcast's untimely passing meant that Shenmue II performed significantly worse than its predecessor, only selling 100,000 copies worldwide. Despite this, the game continued to enjoy a huge cult following over the years, and many players' dreams finally came true when a crowdfunding campaign led to the release of Shenmue III in 2019, some 18 years after the second game. This joy would soon turn to sorrow, however, as Suzuki once again ended things on a bloody cliffhanger and spoke of his desire to one day make Shenmue IV, instead of just resolving the story once and for all and giving Ryo the justice the poor lad's been waiting decades for. ■

SILENT SCOPE

Year	2000
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami

WALK THROUGH AN arcade at the turn of the millennium and you may have come face-to-face with the imposing cabinet of Silent Scope, a lightgun shooter where players used a full-sized sniper rifle pointed at the screen. In the arcade version, the idea was that the main screen would show an entire location viewed at a distance – a view of a street, for example, or overlooking a hotel from a rooftop across the road – and the player could move the rifle to direct a red crosshair towards a certain part of the screen. By then looking in the gun's sight, they would then see a second screen showing that area zoomed in, enabling them to take out enemies. Naturally, the home versions of the game weren't going to be bundled with a replica sniper rifle, so instead the scope view is toggled by holding down the L trigger. Each stage has a different mission, be that a simple 'kill all the bad guys' to more complicated situations, such as trying to pick out specific targets by looking through windows, using a night vision lens, or – my favourite – sitting in a helicopter and trying to rescue a hostage, who's being carried across an American football field by a terrorist while players try to tackle him. Despite being a lightgun game (albeit an unconventional one), the Dreamcast version of Silent Scope doesn't support the Dreamcast Gun or Dream Blaster, meaning players have to use a controller instead. ■

FACT

By pressing Left, Right, Right, X, Y while choosing a level you'll hear a voice saying 'wow'. The game will now have a pink filter, play romantic music and replace your crosshair with a love heart.

SILVER

Year	2000
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Spiral House

THE WORLD OF Jarrah was a once peaceful land until the evil sorcerer Silver took over and started ruling with ruthless depravity. Silver's reign of terror, however, hasn't quite reached Verdante, a quiet and peaceful forest where a young man called David lives with his wife Jennifer. That tranquility ends when Silver decides he wants a new bride, and sends his soldiers out across Jarrah to gather all its 'child-bearing women'. Jennifer is seized – by Silver's son Fuge, no less – and a distraught David heads out to rescue her, using the training he learned from his grandfather, a battle-scarred veteran who appears to have a past with Fuge. As part of his rescue mission, David has to travel across Jarrah's eight islands, defeating the enemies he encounters along the way, in search of eight magic orbs – Fire, Ice, Earth, Light, Time, Lightning, Acid and Health – which each add new magic spells to his repertoire. This somewhat underappreciated RPG mixes 3D characters with 2D artwork in a similar style to the PS1-era Final Fantasy titles, but rather than offering turn-based combat it instead opts for a real-time approach, where you choose one of your party members and gain full control of them (while the AI takes over the others). While exploring you can also bring up a radial menu (named the Pie Menu here), allowing you to quickly select food, inventory, weapons and the like on the fly instead of sifting through menus. ■

FACT

Designer Warren Lancashire once said his love of JRPGs was a big influence on Silver. Lead developer Bobby Earl added that this didn't include Final Fantasy VII, because they'd started work on Silver before its release.

SKIES OF ARCADIA

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Overworks

DEVELOPED BY SEGA'S Overworks division, previously known as AM7, Skies of Arcadia (known as Eternal Arcadia in Japan) is generally regarded to be one of the best RPGs on the Dreamcast. It tells the story of Vyse and Aika, proud members of the Blue Rogues, a group of air pirates who have Robin Hood-style justice on their minds at all times. The group was formed to fight the evil Valuan Empire, whose leader Empress Teodora wants to find six Moon Crystals so she can resurrect the Gigas – huge living WMDs – and use them to take over the world. It's up to Vyse and chums to head out and find the Moon Crystals first, while kicking any Valuan rump they come across along the way.

Gameplay mainly consists of exploring a series of maze-like dungeons, taking on random enemy encounters as they come up. Battles, meanwhile, are your typical turn-based setup with teams of up to four players and the usual range of options like attack, guard, magic and so on. There are also occasional airship battles, which act similarly to standard battles but now let your party use cannons located around your ship. On paper, then, it doesn't sound drastically different to most other RPGs of the era, but Skies of Arcadia was critically acclaimed for its impressive visuals (including great facial expressions), its engaging story and its brilliant localisation, which took great pains to ensure all the jokes landed for western audiences. ■

FACT

Vyse is such a cult favourite among Sega fans that he appeared as a playable character in the karting game Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed, which also included a Skies of Arcadia themed track.

SLAVE ZERO

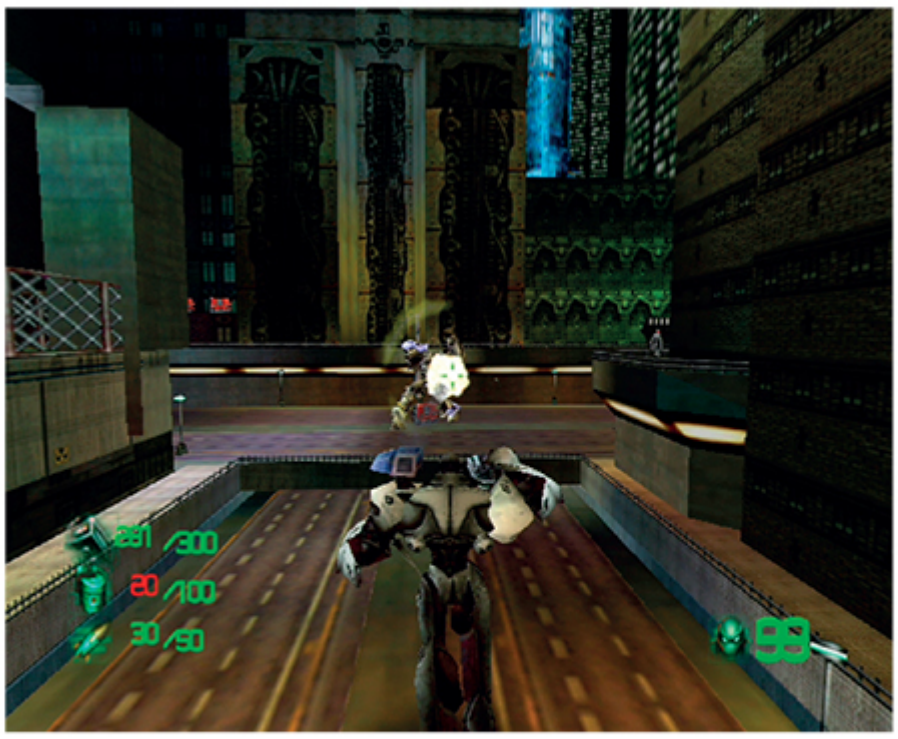
Year 1999
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Infogrames North America

IN 500 YEARS from now, the enormous vertical city of Megacity S1-9 is ruled with the iron fist of the SovKhan, ruler of the First Corporate Dynasty. The city is being used as a military industrial complex, spewing pollutants into the surrounding area and causing general crappiness. The SovKhan's dominance will soon be even more certain with the introduction of Slaves, enormous 60-foot war machine mechs capable of inhuman levels of destruction. That's where the Guardians – the descendants of an ancient clan of warrior priests – come in. They've managed to steal a Slave hot off the production line and plan to use it to take down the rest of the SovKhan's defences, in the hope they can topple the Dynasty and save humanity.

Originally designed with the PC in mind before also getting a Dreamcast port, Slave Zero has a pretty complex control scheme as a result. Players use the A, B, X, Y buttons to move and strafe while aiming with the analogue stick, while the triggers and D-Pad pull off other actions like firing, jumping, stomping and the like. It's a lot to take in – to grab an enemy, for example, you have to hold the D-Pad to the Right and press the L trigger – but once the controls are mastered there's a real sense that this mech can do serious damage to the Dynasty's military forces, assault units and infantry mechs. There's also a local multiplayer mode for 1–4 players, featuring basic Deathmatch gameplay across eight maps. ■

FACT

A prequel called Slave Zero X was announced in 2022. It ditches the third-person viewpoint for a side-scrolling, sprite-based action game more like Strider or Shinobi.



SNO-CROSS CHAMPIONSHIP RACING

Year 2000
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Unique Development Studios

NOT TO BE confused with Polaris SnoCross, which was in the *N64 Encyclopedia* (this one has a hyphen, for starters), Sno-Cross Championship Racing was handled by Unique Development Studios, a Swedish developer which had previously released No Fear Downhill Mountain Biking on the PlayStation before ditching mud for snow. The game contains seven tracks, taking in Aspen (USA), Nagano (Japan), Calgary (Canada), Munich (Germany), Murmansk (Russia), Kitzbühel (Austria) and Kiruna (Sweden). These can be tackled on twelve different snowmobiles, all of which are Yamaha models (and were allegedly 'modelled from secret CAD drawings' from Yamaha's R&D department). As well as the ability to take on a single race on any track (either alone or with a second player in split-screen), there's also a Championship mode where you take on a series of 500cc races with the aim being to finish at least 3rd in each of them and unlock the 600cc and 700cc speeds. You earn money based on your finishing position as well as tricks you perform along the way: this can then be spent between racers to repair and upgrade your sled. If you end up becoming a Sno-Cross Championship Racing devotee and its seven tracks start to feel repetitive, there are two hidden comedy ones: a summer course and a cartoon village. And if that's still enough, there's the option to create your own track with a pretty solid course editor, then save it to a VMU and play it at your friend's house. If your friend wants to, I mean. ■

FACT

Perhaps not willing to entirely ditch its wheeled racing past, the developer added cheat codes that let you ride an ATV or a kart instead of a snowmobile.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

Year 2001
Publisher Crave
Developer Runecraft

WHAT DO YOU do when your military career is over but you're still itching to dole out some justice to enemy scum? If you're John Mullins, ex-Special Forces with three tours in Vietnam under your belt and three Purple Hearts on your chest, you form your own mercenary group and offer your services as a scum-killer for hire. In Soldier of Fortune, Mullins and chums are contracted by The Shop – an anti-terrorist group with ties to the United Nations – to check out some dodgy deeds going on beneath the streets of New York City. Their journey takes them on a lengthy campaign (taking in the likes of Sudan, Siberia, Tokyo, Kosovo, Iraq and Uganda) as it emerges a South African neo-fascist group based in Germany is trying to get hold of nuclear weapons. The game is a first-person shooter created using a modified version of the Quake II engine, along with a new damage model engine called GHOUL created by Raven Software (who developed the original PC version). The latter makes weapon damage more realistic, placing 26 different zones on each enemy's body and causing them to react in different ways when specific zones are hit. The game proved controversial for the ability to dismember enemies, which partially led to it being given an 18 rating in the UK. Speaking of which, the game was pulled at the last minute in the UK so the BBFC certificate could be added to the cover. A small number got through, so if you find a UK copy without an 18 rating on the cover it's rarer. ■

FACT

A real Vietnam veteran called John Mullins was a consultant on the game. The manual states clearly that while he gave permission to use his name, the events in the game had nothing to do with his life.

SONIC ADVENTURE 1

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sonic Team

BECAUSE SEGA DECIDED to cancel the Saturn title Sonic X-Treme two years into development, this meant the Saturn somehow managed to go its entire life without getting a single brand new 3D Sonic platformer that wasn't a port (Sonic 3D) or a compilation (Sonic Jam). To go such a long time without catering to fans of your main mascot is commercial insanity, which is why Sonic Adventure, a brand new Sonic title, arrived on the Dreamcast just a few weeks after the console's launch in Japan, and on day one in the west. And boy, was it worth the wait.

While Sonic fans had already been given the chance to dabble with polygonal Sonic environments in racing game Sonic R and the free-roaming area in Sonic Jam, it's fair to say that Sonic Adventure was the first 'proper' polygonal title starring everyone's favourite speedy blue pin-cushion. In it, the evil Dr Robotnik – getting this name in the west for the last time before it was officially switched to Dr Eggman – is attempting to find the Chaos Emeralds and feed them to Chaos, an odd watery creature that grows when it absorbs the Emeralds' power. If it's able to get every Emerald it'll turn into Perfect Chaos, and Eggman wants to harness this power so he can destroy the city of Station Square and build his own city, Eggmanland, on top of it.

It goes without saying that it's Sonic's job to stop this from happening, but this time he's joined by no fewer than five friends, each with their own separate campaign. Not only does each character get their own story, cutscenes and stage progression, they also have their own unique gameplay style that separates them from the others. Naturally, Sonic's campaign is the most straightforward, with the aim being to reach the end of each stage. Tails has the ability to fly around, but his stages also require him to finish each level before Sonic does, making them more like Time Trials in nature. Knuckles can glide and climb, and his stages require more exploration, as he attempts to find three Master Emerald shards hidden in each stage. Amy Rose is armed with her large mallet and her stages are slower and more puzzle-based in nature, while E-102 Gamma – an Eggman robot turned good – can attack enemies with projectiles. Finally, there's the infamous Big the Cat, an enormous purple feline whose stages mainly involve fishing sections where he tries to catch his friend Froggy.

FACT

Sega did a deal with Hollywood Video in the US in which, two months before the Dreamcast launched, customers could rent a pre-release console with a near-complete 'Limited Edition' version of Sonic Adventure.

Sonic's 3D platformers are notorious for their glitches and bugs, and as the first entry it goes without saying that Sonic Adventure has more than its fair share. That said, the visually impressive stages, the charming (if sparse) open-world hub areas, the variety in gameplay styles and fun bonus features (like the ability to take care of little Chao characters and raise them, virtual pet style, on your VMU) meant that Sonic's first proper foray into the world of polygons was much-loved in spite of its foibles. ■

SONIC ADVENTURE 2

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sonic Team

IT SHOULD PROBABLY come as no surprise that Sonic Adventure was a massive success on the Dreamcast: indeed, at around 2.5 million copies sold, it was the console's best-selling game overall. The inevitable sequel was to follow, and even though – given the Dreamcast's short life – it arrived after the console had already been discontinued, it still managed to shift half a million copies, which is nothing to sniff at. Thankfully, the game would go on to get an enhanced GameCube port called Sonic Adventure 2: Battle, ensuring more people could play it on… um, another third-placed console. Still, though.

The sequel opens with Sonic already captured by G.U.N., a secret military force that believes he's responsible for some sort of wrong-doing. After escaping from a helicopter and racing through the city in one of the series' most iconic stages, Sonic encounters a new, black-coloured hedgehog who it quickly emerges is the one G.U.N. is mistaking for Sonic. He's Shadow, and he's in cahoots with Eggman as he once again plans to take over the world using the power of the Chaos Emeralds.

Whereas Sonic Adventure 2 once again has six playable characters, this time things are handled a little differently. For starters, three of them are the bad guys this time, and there are no longer six different campaigns. This time there are initially only two campaigns, Hero and Dark, each starring three different characters who are controlled in certain stages. The Hero campaign naturally stars Sonic, as well as Tails and Knuckles. Tails' stages are no longer straightforward platformer levels and instead have him piloting a souped-up version of his Tornado plane, using its transformation ability to turn it into a mech and stomp around his stages, firing missiles at enemies. Knuckles, meanwhile, plays similarly to the first game and his stages are still focused on exploration, once again requiring him to find three Master Emerald shards.

FACT

To celebrate Sonic's 10th anniversary, Sega sold a special 'Birthday Pack' for two days only in Japan. It included Sonic Adventure 2, a soundtrack CD, a history book, and a collectible coin.

The Dark campaign replaces Amy, Big and E-102 Gamma with three new playable characters: Eggman himself, Shadow and a treasure-hunting bat called Rouge. While the characters' personalities differ greatly from the heroes, the Dark characters' stages are actually similar, with each matching a Hero's gameplay style. As such, Shadow's levels are simple 'reach the goal' affairs like Sonic's, while Eggman has a mech like Tails' and Rouge has the same shard-finding levels as Knuckles. Once both campaigns are cleared, a third Last Story is unlocked in which all six characters are used, bringing the plot to a close.

While it continued to receive criticism for the same sort of glitches and camera clunkiness that were seen in the first game, Sonic Adventure 2 was nevertheless praised for focusing more on action than its predecessor, and while the pairing up of gameplay styles technically meant less variety, it was generally agreed that the likes of Big's fishing stages and Amy's slower stages weren't missed too much if the alternative was blowing things up in a big mech. ■

SONIC SHUFFLE

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sonic Team

WITH THE MARIO Party games almost single-handedly redefining the 'party' genre over on the Nintendo 64, it was understandable that Sega would want to try to capture the same magic with Sonic and chums. Sonic Shuffle, then, is a party game in which players can choose between Sonic, Tails, Knuckles and Amy Rose (with four more unlockable characters) as they compete on five different boards. The story goes that Sonic receives a message from Lumina Flowlight, a guardian fairy from the Maginaryworld who needs help restoring the Precioustone, a shattered gemstone made of the hopes and dreams of people from other dimensions.

It's up to the foursome to head to different Maginaryworld locations and recover the pieces of the Precioustone. Each of the game's boards is based on the dreams of one of the characters: the beach-themed Emerald Coast is Knuckles' dreamworld, the airship-themed Fire Bird is the dreamworld belonging to Tails, the grassy Nature Zone is Amy's, and the speed-heavy Riot Train is Sonic's. The fifth and final area, Fourth Dimension Space, is a special area where everyone else's dreams are stored. As with Mario Party and its Super Stars, the aim here is to navigate each board and be the player who collects the most Precioustone shards, all while landing on special spaces that trigger certain events, and taking part in mini-games along the way. These mini-games were the main source of Sonic Shuffle's criticism, with some saying they weren't up to the same level of quality as those seen in Mario Party games. ■

FACT

If you play the game on 24 December (or set your Dreamcast's internal clock to that date) and play in Versus mode, Lumina is replaced by Nights from the Saturn game of the same name.

SOUL FIGHTER

Year	1999
Publisher	Mindscape
Developer	Toka

WHEN KING VALMEK'S eldest son is found dead at the bottom of a cliff, his wife Antea and his other son Felies turn to the dark arts in an attempt to resurrect him, stopping only to kill Valmek's chief swordsman when he tries to stop them. Valmek banishes his missus and his kid but before long the pair become powerful enough to kill Valmek and take over the kingdom. It now falls to three people to stop them: the swordsman's son Altus, Valmek's trusted servant Sayomi and the kingdom's chief wizard Orion. These are your three playable characters in Soul Fighter, a beat 'em up that takes place over five separate worlds.

Naturally, each character has their own strengths and weaknesses: Altus is slow but strong, Sayomi is fast but weak and Oiron is slow and weak but can use his staff to fire from a distance. You can also pick up weapons along the way, then switch to a first-person viewpoint to throw them at enemies. The aim in each stage is to defeat the beast-like monsters you encounter: these are actually townsfolk who've been transformed into animals by Felies. When you kill them, you collect their souls, and once you get enough souls in a stage you'll be able to take on the boss. The game was criticised for its slippery feel and its rather clunky control scheme: for example, to pick things up you have to hold Down on the D-Pad then quickly press A. ■

FACT

The US *Official Dreamcast Magazine* wasn't impressed by Soul Fighter, scoring it 2/10 and calling it 'a soulless game seemingly designed for masochistic losers'. Steady on.

SOULCALIBUR

Year	1999
Publisher	Namco
Developer	Namco

THE DREAMCAST'S SIMILARITY to Sega's Naomi arcade hardware meant it was the first console capable of producing near-perfect arcade ports at times. Soulcalibur, however, was that rarest of beasts: a home port that actually looked significantly better than the arcade version. Bringing it to the Dreamcast a little more than a year after it landed in arcades, Namco made the most of that extra 13 months of development to make a game that was improved in practically every aspect, not least of which was the level of visual quality. Character models were far more detailed than they were before and the scaling 2D sprite backgrounds in the arcade version were replaced by full 3D environments, meaning if you put both versions side-by-side the Dreamcast port comes out on top by a sizable margin.

The sequel to 1995's Soul Edge aka Soul Blade, Soulcalibur is similar in that it's a one-on-one fighting game with an emphasis on weaponry. Whereas Namco's more popular Tekken series focused more on hand-to-hand combat, in Soulcalibur each of the 19 playable characters (nine of which have to be unlocked) is armed with their own weapon. Some of these are fairly conventional: take wandering Japanese swordsman Mitsurugi, who's essentially the Ryu of the game and is constantly looking for the ultimate challenge. Others are a little more unusual: Ivy, a platinum-haired fighter infamous for her revealing outfit, is armed with a unique sword that can transform into a chain whip for long-distance attacks. And I don't even know where to begin with Voldo, a blind and insane fighter who fights with dagger gloves and moves in a weird, writhing fashion.

FACT

Although it's not advertised on the packaging, you can actually play Soulcalibur with the Dreamcast Fishing Rod controller, swinging it to perform horizontal and vertical slashes.

The Dreamcast port's improvements don't stop at the major graphical upgrade over the arcade version. A new Mission Battle mode has been added, giving the player a series of fights with unique variables: one could be a 'bouncy battle', where fighters bounce high into the air when they hit the ground and can be juggled, while another could make each fighter's weapons invisible. Completing missions earns the player points, which can then be spent to unlock illustrations in an art gallery.

The new additions made the Dreamcast version the definitive one, then, but there's no denying that it's the weapons-based combat, not the feature set, that makes Soulcalibur a legendary game. It leads to a more diverse range of fighting styles, and makes each character feel noticeably different to the others. Fighting with dandy pirate Maxi and his speedy nunchaku combos feels nothing like playing as the monstrous Astaroth and his enormous axe, who in turn requires a completely different approach to Kilik, with his long-range staff weapon. The result is a game that may not have the most perfectly balanced combat ever created – there's a reason why the first Soulcalibur wasn't played in eSports competitions decades later in the same way games like Street Fighter III and Super Smash Bros Melee were – but is nevertheless an absolute blast to play. ■

SOUTH PARK: CHEF'S LUV SHACK

Year	1999
Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Acclaim Studios Austin

ONE OF THE raunchiest shows on South Park Public Access television, Chef's Luv Shack is a game show in which several lovely ladies compete for the grand prize of a saucy date with South Park's notorious love machine, Chef. There's just one problem: there currently aren't any lovely ladies available, so now the contestants battling for Chef's 'love' are… um, four 8-year-old children from South Park Elementary. In this party game, up to four players can choose between Cartman, Kenny, Stan and Kyle as they answer a series of trivia questions, many of which have questionable category names but often turn out to be perfectly harmless. For example, a question under the category 'God Damned It' simply asks the player what state Death Valley is in. If you're playing with friends and you don't think one of them knows the answer, you can buzz in and use a 'shaft' to force them to answer it, causing them to lose points if they don't. After a few questions a randomly chosen mini-game (from 20 in total) will take place: these range from slapping a four-assed monkey's quartet of backsides in a set order, to a shoot 'em up called Asses in Space. Although the game was released on N64 first, that version only had limited audio dialogue because of the limitations of cartridge storage. The Dreamcast version instead has Chef reading out all the questions, adding an extra level of authenticity to what is otherwise a relatively standard trivia and mini-game offering. ■

FACT

If you can't decide which character to play as, choose Cartman. A few of the mini-games only appear if you play as him, including the Donkey Kong clone Bad Kitty.

SOUTH PARK RALLY

Year	2000
Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Tantalus Interactive

THIS SOUTH PARK take on Mario Kart was originally released on the PlayStation, N64 and PC and received a kicking from critics. The Dreamcast version arrived six months later and while it didn't fare much better, there had at least been attempts made to address some of the issues raised. According to the game's plot, the residents of South Park take to the roads every time there's a major holiday and have a karting competition. Rather than just taking part in straight racing, each holiday has a different set of rules: during the Cow Days holiday, for example, everyone has Mad Cow Disease and you need to hold onto the antidote for as long as possible, while Valentine's Day is a battle mode where you have to shoot everyone with arrows, and Easter has you driving around the course trying to collect 20 eggs before anyone else. Despite the clear attempt to introduce some variety to proceedings, most of the criticism levelled at the game came from how difficult and fiddly some of these events were. The Dreamcast version tried to ease the frustration by making the AI easier to deal with and repurposing some of the tracks so they were easier to navigate. The Dreamcast version also got a new mode called Mini Championship, which ditches all the gimmicks and lets you have a standard race on any of the tracks you've unlocked. If you must have a copy of the game, then, the Dreamcast version is the one to get. ■

FACT

One of the playable characters is Scuzzlebutt, the basket-weaving monster that lives in the mountains. In the show one of his legs is Dallas star Patrick Duffy, but not in South Park Rally.

SPACE CHANNEL 5

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	United Game Artists

ALIEN INVASION STORYLINES are a dime a dozen, but how about an alien dance invasion? Set in the twenty-fifth century, Space Channel 5 sees the Earth infiltrated by the Morolians, a colourful race of extraterrestrials keen on taking over. The twist is that instead of just killing everyone as is the typical alien strategy, the Morolians instead have a special ray gun that makes Earthlings dance uncontrollably, essentially making them slaves to the Morolians' rhythms. Sensing a big scoop, little-watched news broadcaster Space Channel 5 sends their rookie reporter Ulala to Spaceport 9, the scene of the first attack, to try and cover the story before anyone else. It's up to Ulala to not only prove her chops as a star journalist, but also save the world by taking on the Morolians at their own game and trying to out-dance them. To make matters worse, she also has to compete with Pudding, Channel 42's own budding reporter, who has plenty of fans from her days as a teen idol and wants to make sure Ulala doesn't steal her spotlight.

Space Channel 5 is a rhythm action game with a rather basic set of commands and a call-and-response mechanic. In each stage Ulala will come up across waves of Morolians, who'll shout out dance moves to the beat – 'up, down, up, down, shoot shoot shoot', that sort of thing – and Ulala then has to repeat the sequence with perfect timing. If she makes a mistake she loses a life heart, and if she loses all her hearts then the world has danced its last jig. To make matters slightly trickier, one of the commands is 'shoot' but Ulala actually has two types of laser, depending on who she's up against. If it's Morolians the A button shoots them with a standard blaster, but occasionally the Morolians will send out hypnotised Earthlings instead to use them as shields. In these situations you use the B button instead, to fire a different laser that snaps them out of their trance: this also makes the freed Earthlings join Ulala as her backing dancers.

FACT

Michael Jackson was only added with a month to go. After he asked to be put in the game, Sega swapped out an NPC for him, and he was reportedly happy with the results.

In terms of its actual gameplay, then, Space Channel 5 is probably one of the most basic games on the Dreamcast. Despite this, the game was critically successful and Ulala became a cult favourite character among Sega fans, mainly due to the quality of its presentation, its catchy music and its downright bizarre premise. The fun art design depicts a 'retro' future where everyone looks like they're dressed in the sort of space-age outfits seen in the sci-fi shows of the swinging '60s, while the '50s style big band jazz soundtrack gives the game a unique charm unlike anything else available on consoles at the time. And as if a game about a journalist dressed like a go-go dancer who fights aliens by trying to outdance them doesn't sound eccentric enough, a cameo by Michael Jackson is a perfectly odd cherry atop a surreal pie. ■

SPAWN: IN THE DEMON'S HAND

Year	2000
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

BASED ON THE *Spawn* comic book series by Todd McFarlane, In the Demon's Hand was originally released in arcades before making the jump to the Dreamcast as a home console exclusive. It's a fighting game of sorts but one that's played from a third-person perspective (similar to Sega's Cyber Troopers Virtual On). Players can take part in hand-to-hand combat up close or collect weapons lying around the stage and use them to attack opponents from a distance. The game also supports play for up to four players, either in team-based or free-for-all formats. At first you have 12 characters to choose from, including Spawn himself, and as you complete the game's main Boss Attack mode with specific characters you unlock new ones until the roster reaches a much healthier total of 37. Boss Attack has you trying to defeat a boss character within a certain time limit, while also trying to fend off their goons at the same time. Then there's Team Battle mode, where you and another player fight against two others, as well as Battle Royale mode where four players compete to see who's the best. If you don't have friends to make up the numbers in Team Battle and Battle Royale, these modes also have special 'Tournament' versions where AI-controlled players make up the numbers and you fight progressively more difficult opponents each time. Despite attempting to mix things up with an unconventional style, In the Demon's Hand was met with a mixed response and it didn't 'spawn' any sequels (sorry). ■

FACT

The game's cover artwork isn't actually original: it's taken from the cover of issue 95 of the *Spawn* comic.

SPEED DEVILS

Year	1999
Publisher	Ubisoft
Developer	Ubisoft Montreal

IF YOU'RE A bit of an old-school PC game player, you may recognise this game as Speed Busters: American Highways, before it was ported to the Dreamcast the following year and given a name change. It's a Ubisoft-developed racing game where arcade-style madcappery is the order of the day. The game has 14 tracks, covering such locations as Louisiana, New York, Mexico, Nevada, Aspen, Hollywood, Montreal and 'Canada' (because apparently Montreal was too specific), some of which have silly set-pieces to add to the anarchy of it all. The Nevada track, for example, starts off in a neon sign museum then proceeds to the desert, where a UFO passes overhead. You then hit a jump that sends you right through the inside of a parked aeroplane, before the track eventually takes you to the city where garish lights (especially during the night stage) and 90 degree turns abound. There's no denying, then, that the game at least attempts to keep things lively, and the healthy selection of unlockable cars gives you something to aim towards. The main gimmick, however, comes in the game's Championship mode, where you work your way through a series of races while also taking on occasional bets from other racers. By accepting these bets you have the possibility to win big money which can be spent on upgrades and repairs, or lose it all and end up stuck with your damaged, underpowered old banger. And don't worry, I'm above finishing that with a questionable joke. ■

FACT

Most review scores ranged between 60–80 per cent, except for the Official *US Dreamcast Magazine*, which gave it 30 per cent and said its only positive was 'you can turn it off'.

SPEED DEVILS: ONLINE RACING

Year 2000
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Montreal

RATHER THAN A sequel, Speed Devils: Online Racing is more a re-release of Speed Devils with the addition of online multiplayer for up to five players. A new track has been added, as well as 11 new cars. As in the previous version, the player starts with $10,000 to buy their first car and then has to win more money by taking part in races. You can still make bets to try and win more money or new cars, but this time the wagers are against other human players online. Obviously not everyone had online access back then (and certainly not now) so there's still an offline mode, but this time all the cars, tracks and upgrades are unlocked from the start, so there's not much incentive. ■

FACT

Five months before the game was released, a Ubisoft spokesperson claimed there would be '14 completely new tracks'. Well, they were only 13 out.

SPEC OPS II: OMEGA SQUAD

Year 2000
Publisher Ripcode Games
Developer Runecraft

THE SPEC OPS games are a series of first-person tactical shooters, with the second game originally released on PC in 1999 under the name Spec Ops II: Green Berets. This Dreamcast version isn't a straight port: it differs noticeably from Green Berets in that players only control a single soldier instead of a whole squad. Rather than an overarching storyline, Omega Squad instead offers a collection of standalone missions with no real connection other than the fact that they all involve protecting America from some potential threat or another. The 26 missions take place over five regions – Antarctica, Korea, Pakistan, Tailand and Germany – and generally take place in the future, rather than attempting to recreate real-life incidents that happened in the past. ■

FACT

After a decade without any Spec Ops games, 2K Games released Spec Ops: The Line in 2012. It was generally well received by critics but sold poorly, and there hasn't been another since.

SPIDER-MAN

Year 2001
Publisher Activision
Developer Treyarch

ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED BY Neversoft for the PlayStation in 2000, Activision's first Spider-Man game got a Dreamcast port the following year, with Treyarch – which would go on to lead development on the much-loved Spider-Man 2 game – handling conversion duties. The game opens with Dr Otto Octavius, having seemingly turned over a new leaf, presenting a demonstration at a Science Expo. A suspicious Peter Parker is in attendance to see if the Doc really has changed his tune, but that suspicion turns to surprise when 'Spider-Man' arrives, steals the Doc's equipment and wrecks Eddie Brock's camera. It's up to Peter – as the real Spider-Man, obviously – to find out who's behind this impostor Spidey, while also trying to deal with the police (who think he's committed a huge crime) and a seething Brock, who's let the Venom symbiote take over his body. The Spider-Man game isn't quite as free-roaming as the follow-ups that would… um follow it up, and as a result the game is more linear than the later Activision efforts, but given the state of previous games starring the webslinger fans were more than happy with the combat-focused gameplay on offer here. Over the course of 34 levels split into six chapters, Spider-Man finds himself up against the likes of Scorpion, Rhino, Venom, Lizard, a load of symbiotes and finally Doctor Octopus himself. Even better, the game's narrated throughout by the legendary Stan Lee, Spider-Man's co-creator, a touch that would win over any self-respecting 'true believer'. ■

FACT

The game's theme song is a cover of the original Spider-Man theme from the '60s animated series, remixed by British electronic group Apollo Four Forty.

SPIRIT OF SPEED 1937

Year 2000
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Broadsword Interactive

SPIRIT OF SPEED attempts to set itself apart from other racing games by specifically focusing on cars that were available a couple of years before the outbreak of World War II. There are a total of 15 officially licensed vintage racers to choose from: there's a trio of Alfa Romeo beauties, a couple of Auto Union cars, two Bugattis, two Mercedes-Benzes, and a few others like the Watson Flyer, the Napier-Railton, the ERA Remus and the Bonner Special (stop chuckling). There are nine courses, most of which are based on real-life tracks such as Donnington in England and Monza in Italy. Some of them – like Brooklands in England and the Roosevelt Raceway in the US – don't even exist anymore, but do here, thanks to the 1937 gimmick. Indeed, one of the tracks is set in a location that doesn't even exist now: the Mellaha Lake track is set in Italian Tripolitania, which became Libya in 1945. As well as the typical Single Race and Championship modes you'd expect in a racing game, Spirit of Speed also has a Scenarios mode, where you're given 10 specific situations and asked to win in each (such as competing with a slower car). On paper, the idea of a racing game set during the Depression era is an interesting one, but unfortunately critical consensus was that the main source of depression in Spirit of Speed was in the playing of the game, with erratic handling, plain course design and exceptionally long loading times. ■

FACT

Oddly, Spirit of Speed was published under Acclaim's LJN label, which had been closed back in 1994. The label was synonymous with bad games, and was never used again after this.

SPORTS JAM

Year 2001
Publisher Agetec
Developer WOW Entertainment

ORIGINALLY RELEASED IN arcades before coming to the Dreamcast a year later, Sports Jam is a sports-themed mini-game compilation handled by WOW Entertainment (formerly known as Sega's AM1 team). The game is hosted by a ridiculously detailed (and oddly shiny) presenter, who unnervingly takes up the entire screen and asks you to choose an event. There are 12 in total, covering eight different sports: football, American football, baseball, golf, cycling, ice hockey, tennis and basketball. Given the game's arcade origins, each event is pretty straightforward, with most using only one button. Events include Long Shoot (a football game where you have to score a free kick), Touchdown Derby (bash buttons to reach the goal line and score a touchdown before your opponent does), Puck Rally (a sort of Pong meets ice hockey affair), The Kicker (where you have to score a field goal from an obtuse angle) and Computer Receive (which borrows heavily from Virtua Tennis and has you trying to hit targets during a rally). There's an Arcade mode where the player takes on up to four events, and a remixed DC Original mode where you can earn medals for clearing certain requirements. By earning enough medals you can eventually earn trophies, which unlock various silly gimmicks, such as the ability to ride a standard street bicycle in the cycling event. Although its coin-op nature means there isn't a lot of depth to Sports Jam, it's still something of a hidden gem in that it's one of a few Sega-developed games on the system that flew under most radars. ■

FACT

At the time, the presenter on the menu screen was considered the most detailed character in the history of console games, made up of more than 18,000 polygons (compared to around 14,000 in Shenmue).

STAR WARS: DEMOLITION

Year 2000
Publisher LucasArts
Developer Luxoflux

AFTER FINDING SUCCESS with its vehicular combat games Vigilante 8 and Vigilant 8: 2nd Offense, developer Luxoflux was employed by LucasArts to apply its game engine to the world of *Star Wars*. The result was Star Wars: Demolition, a game that plays similarly to the Vigilante 8 games but with the obvious difference that its cars and trucks have been replaced by speeder bikes and podracers. Set during the period of the original trilogy, the story goes that the Empire has outlawed podracing, so Jabba the Hutt has set up a more dangerous underground contest designed to keep gamblers coming to his Tatooine betting parlours. Competitors have come from all over the galaxy – some willingly, some forced – to compete in vehicular battles to the death. At first there are six characters to choose from, some completely new and some known to fans (such as Boba Fett and Tamtel Skreej, the latter being Lando Calrissian in disguise). As you complete the game's Tournament mode, which sees you taking on one, then two, then three, then four opponents at a time, you unlock more combatants, including Darth Maul (which is a bit weird given the timeline) and Malakili, better known as the Rancor keeper at Jabba's Palace. Naturally, the latter rides a Rancor instead of a vehicle. Battles take place on familiar *Star Wars* locations, from the Dune Sea in Tatooine to the ice planet Hoth, to the streets of Naboo. ■

FACT

All of Boba Fett's information including his homeworld is listed as 'unknown' in the manual. That's because the game was released before *Episode II*, where it was revealed that he's a clone from Kamino.

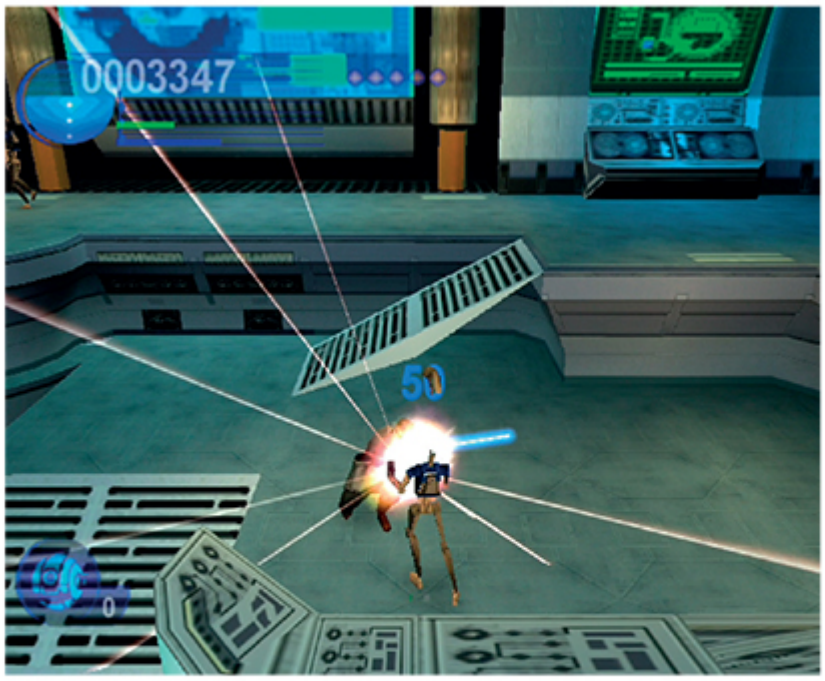
STAR WARS EPISODE I: JEDI POWER BATTLES

Year 2000
Publisher LucasArts
Developer LucasArts

THIS THIRD-PERSON ACTION game roughly follows the story of *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, letting you play through some of the events that happened in the movie and others which took place at the same time. There are initially five Jedi to choose between: Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jinn, Mace Windu, Adi Gallia and Plo Koon (though the latter three have the wrong colour of lightsaber because up until this point they hadn't used one in the movies). Also exclusive to the Dreamcast version is Ki-Adi-Mundi, who's unlocked when you beat the game's Training mode. After choosing your hero you start on the Trade Federation Battleship, before your adventure takes you to the likes of the Naboo swamps, Theed, Tatooine and Coruscant until, on the tenth and final stage, you take on Darth Maul in the game's climactic battle. You can either play through the game solo or team up with a friend to take on the adventure in co-op (and no, you don't have to make Qui-Gon die at the end this time). It's not all over once the game is beaten, though: you can also unlock the ability to play as three non-Jedi, meaning you get to instead control Queen Amidala, Captain Panaka or even Darth Maul. There are also some interesting unlockable bonus stages, including one called Gungan Roundup in which players compete against each other to try and force Jar Jar into their cell by jabbing him with a pointy stick. This isn't a joke, this is an actual thing. ■

FACT

When the game was originally released on PlayStation, Darth Maul only had a single-bladed lightsaber. This was fixed to his more iconic two-bladed one for the Dreamcast version.



STAR WARS EPISODE I: RACER

Year	2000
Publisher	LucasArts
Developer	LucasArts

IF YOU SAT through the podracing sequence in *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* and didn't think to yourself 'I'd love to try that', you were either a liar or a frankly sensible person who clearly understood the risks involved in such an activity. Either way, Episode I: Racer gives you the chance to experience the white-knuckle action of podracing (assuming you pick a character with knuckles) without the likelihood of a gruesome death. At first there are six characters to choose from: while most players will obviously pick young Anakin Skywalker because he's the only one who appears in the movie for more than two frames, the rest are a colourful bunch too. And if they don't take your fancy there are a further 17 racers to unlock including the nasty Sebulba, Anakin's main rival in the race shown in the film. Since the movie only showed a single podrace, it goes without saying that its Boonta racecourse is the first track in Episode I: Racer, but a racing game with only one course would be a bit rubbish so there are another 24 in there too, with the developers at LucasArts given free rein to make their own tracks set on the likes of water planet Aquilaris, ice planet Ando Prime and dusty red planet Mon Gazza. In a pre-Lego Star Wars era, Episode I: Racer was considered one of the best Star Wars games made up to that point, and its HD re-release in 2020 shows it still holds up. ■

FACT

A number of Episode I actors reprised their roles in the game, including Jake Lloyd as Anakin, Andrew Secombe as Watto, Lewis MacLeod as Sebulba and Greg Proops as the two-headed commentator.

STARLANCER

Year	2000
Publisher	Crave
Developer	Digital Anvil

STAR WARS GAMES are all well and good, but it was widely agreed among PC players that when it came to space combat games, the Wing Commander series generally 'did' Star Wars better than the officially licensed efforts. StarLancer is of note, then, because it was created by Chris and Erin Roberts, the brothers responsible for the Wing Commander games, and as such does a similar job of combining first-person space missions with a healthy helping of plot. The game is set in the year 2160 where, despite having colonised the entire solar system, the Earth's nations are still divided by conflict, with two main factions forming: the Alliance (including America, Australia, Europe and Japan) and the Coalition (Russia, China and the Middle-East). As a new recruit for the Alliance's 45th Volunteers squadron, you arrive just as the Coalition has ruined a peace treaty by orchestrating a surprise attack that has completely wiped out the French and Italian fleets. The game's 24 missions are fairly straightforward affairs, with a heavy focus on action, so expect to be doing a lot of dogfighting with Coalition ships. The game is also more linear than the Wing Commander games, which were notable for their branching storylines. Combat is accompanied by a wealth of recorded dialogue, making StarLancer one of the chattiest Dreamcast games. Critical reception to StarLancer was generally positive, though the Dreamcast version wasn't quite as well-loved as the PC version it was ported from because the controls were slightly awkward. Those who like space combat should certainly try it, though. ■

FACT

StarLancer sold around 400,00 copies across both formats. In its annual awards in 2000, IGN gave the PC version the runner-up prize in its 'Best Game No-One Played' category.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3: SAIKYO DOJO

Year 1999
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

AS PLAYERS CONTINUED to wonder when Capcom would finally release Street Fighter III, it instead gave them a prequel in the shape of Street Fighter Alpha in 1995, followed by a 1996 sequel. Street Fighter III finally arrived in 1997, but Capcom wasn't done with the Alpha series yet, hence Street Fighter Alpha 3 in 1998. The original arcade version greatly increased the second game's roster from 18 to 28, adding a bunch of Street Fighter II favourites like Balrog, Vega, Blanka, Honda and Cammy and some new characters (like Cody from Final Fight). Gameplay-wise, the main addition to Alpha 3 is the 'ism' system, which gives the player three different fighting styles. A-ism (or Z-ism in Japan) is the playing style used in the other Alpha games, where you have a three-stage Super Combo gauge and a number of Super Combo moves. X-ism is more like Super Street Fighter II Turbo's style, where you have a single Super Combo gauge and a single (but more powerful) move. Finally, V-ism lets you pull off custom combos like in Alpha 2. The console port added a further six characters – including Guile, Dee Jay, Fei Long and T. Hawk – as well as new modes like World Tour (where you travel around the world building your fighter's stats), Survival and the 2-on-1 Dramatic Battle. The Dreamcast version in particular also added the titular Saikyo Dojo mode, where your character is extremely weak and you have to fight two extremely strong opponents. ■

FACT

The Japanese version was re-released as Street Fighter Zero 3 for Matching Service, which added an Online Versus mode.

STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE

Year 2000
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

THE THIRD 'MAIN' Street Fighter game was a big moment in the series' history, but in typical Capcom form it wasn't content to only release a single Street Fighter III game and move on. Instead, there were three different iterations of Street Fighter III, of which 3rd Strike was the third and final version. You can find the first two on the next page, but the main gameplay difference added to 3rd Strike was the Guard Parry, also known as the Red Parry because your character turns red when it's correctly performed. This lets you parry during a guard stun, enabling you to quickly recover from combos and leave your opponent wide open for a counter-attack. The 14 playable characters from the second iteration returned for 3rd Strike, while five new fighters were added (including Chun-Li) to bring the roster up to 19. Makoto is a young Japanese girl who specialises in karate, while Remy is a French kickboxer looking to get revenge on his dad for abandoning him and his sister. Meanwhile, Q is a mysterious robotic masked man in a trenchcoat, and rounding things off is Twelve, a weird morphing humanoid that can turn into any weapon, T-1000 Terminator style. The Dreamcast version was the first home console port and included the ability to play as Gill, the final boss. It also included new remixes of each character's stage music, which would play any time the third round of a fight was reached. ■

FACT

3rd Strike was home to the infamous 'Evo Moment 37' in which, during a tournament, Daigo Umehara parried all 15 hits of a move when a single hit would have beaten him. The number 37 was chosen at random.

STREET FIGHTER III: DOUBLE IMPACT

Year 1999
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

BEFORE CAPCOM EVENTUALLY released Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike, there were two other iterations of Street Fighter III. Rather than porting them individually, Capcom bundled them both in this compilation for the Dreamcast, meaning players could enjoy the more feature-packed second game and have the (therefore rather redundant) first version available too. The first game, Street Fighter III: New Generation, gives players a choice of 11 characters, only two of whom – Ryu and Ken – had been in a previous Street Fighter game. As well as its almost entirely original roster, it also introduced to the series new ways of moving around the screen, such as dashing and high jumps, and also replaced Super Combos with Super Arts, where players can choose between three different special moves. Most interesting, though, is the new parry feature. By pressing forward or down at the exact moment your enemy's attack is about to hit you, you can dodge it without taking any damage (not even the slight 'chip damage' you can get when blocking), adding a huge risk/reward system. The sequel, Street Fighter III 2nd Impact: Giant Attack, adds three new characters: Akuma, Hugo (aka Andore from Final Fight) and Urien. It also added EX Specials (more powerful versions of standard special moves) and the ability to escape throws. This Dreamcast bundle adds training modes to each game, makes the two unplayable boss characters Gill and Shin Akuma pliable, and adds a new Parry Attack mode to 2nd Impact which lets players practice their parrying abilities. ■

FACT

Chun-Li can be seen bathing in one of the stages in both games. This wasn't considered good enough by fans, so she returned as a playable fighter in 3rd Strike.

STUNT GP

Year 2001
Publisher EON Digital Entertainment
Developer Team17

THE RATHER NICHE radio-controlled car racing genre may have been dominated on the Dreamcast by Re-Volt (mainly thanks to its presence on a demo disc), but Team17's Stunt GP, which was only released in Europe, has a decent crack at it too. While Re-Volt (and Toy Racer, for that matter) play on the idea that you're a tiny car racing in a 'giant' real world environment, Stunt GP plays it far straighter: there's no driving under beds or zooming down the aisles of supermarkets, and while the tracks are still set in fairly glamorous locations they look a lot more like the 'normal' tracks you'd see in a racing game. That said, as the title suggests, there's still a heavy focus on stunts here, with the 16 available cars able to perform flips and barrel rolls during jumps. These stunts are tied to the game's other main mechanic, which is the fact that each car runs on a battery. Any time you flip your car, fall off the track, use a turbo boost or what have you, the battery runs out at a greater rate, and if it fully empties you'll drive at a snail's pace. Successfully pulling off stunts, however, restores the battery a little, meaning stylish driving can save your race in some situations. Stunt GP may not be remembered among the best of the Dreamcast's racing games, but it's quite possible that this is down to the fact it wasn't released in North America rather than a reflection of the game's quality. ■

FACT

If you live in North America and you fancy trying out Stunt GP, you may want to jump over from Sega to Sony: the game did get a PlayStation 2 release in your region.

STUPID INVADERS

Year	2001
Publisher	Ubisoft
Developer	Xilam

IT'S FAIR TO SAY the point-and-click genre doesn't get much love on consoles, and certainly didn't back in the standard definition era. Despite having an optional mouse controller, the Dreamcast's western library has a single point-and-click adventure to its name, the visually impressive Stupid Invaders. Based on the French animated series *Space Goofs* (which was originally known in the UK as *Home to Rent*), the game follows five bumbling aliens as they try to avoid capture by the evil Dr Sakarin and his henchman Bolok (voiced by Billy West, aka the voice of Ren & Stimpy and Fry from *Futurama*).

Bolok has frozen four of the aliens with a freeze gun, so initially players take control of the fifth alien, Bud, as he escapes and tries to figure out what to do next. Over the course of the game the player gets to control all five aliens in an adventure that's as silly as you'd expect from a game where the first visual gag is a roll of toilet paper branded G.I. Asswipe, with the slogan 'to resist and protect'. The restricted nature of their gameplay means many point-and-click adventures are graphically detailed and Stupid Invaders is no exception: characters and backgrounds are of a very high quality and the game frequently slips into brief FMV sequences when some actions are performed, a gimmick that explains why it takes place over the course of two discs. Ultimately, some very obscure puzzles meant critics were divided over the game. ■

FACT

There were two seasons of *Space Goofs*. One ran between 1997–98, and a revival series ran between 2005–06. Iggy Pop composed the theme tune.

SUPER MAGNETIC NEO

Year	2000
Publisher	Crave
Developer	Genki

THE NOTORIOUS PINKI gang has taken over Pao Pao Park, a popular theme park. The gang have rigged the entire park with magnetic contraptions and unleashed a horde of evil robots to patrol around the park's grounds. Luckily, the local professor has been working on something that could be just the solution: a somewhat hyperactive robot by the name of Neo. It's up to Neo to make his way through the booby-trapped park and give the Pinki gang a swift kick in their pink bums.

Given the gang's love for magnetic devices it's quite fitting that Neo's main abilities revolve around magnetism. Pressing the A button makes Neo emit a pink magnetic field, while pressing the B button gives you a blue one instead. Neo can use both colours to interact with the enemies and objects around him, most of which are also pink and blue. For example, if a blue zip line is floating in the sky, Neo can use his pink magnet to pull himself towards it and cling on. Meanwhile, since two similar magnetic charges repel each other, Neo can stand on pink blocks and use his pink magnet to fling himself up into the air. It's a similar situation with enemies: you can use the same colour to repel them, or use the opposite colour to drag them over to you, at which point Neo can trap them in a box and use it as a projectile. It was a gimmick that, while not hugely successful, would ultimately 'attract' a cult following (sorry). ■

FACT

Neo is called Niuniu in Japan. The team at Genki wanted a name that reflected the character's 'soft look and movement style'.

SUPER RUNABOUT: SAN FRANCISCO EDITION

Year 2000
Publisher Interplay
Developer Climax Entertainment

IT MUST HAVE been hard to release a game about driving round an open city collecting things when you're on a console that already has Crazy Taxi on it, but Super Runabout seemingly didn't mind. This is an updated version of Super Runabout (see the Japanese section of this book), which improves things like acceleration to make things a bit more enjoyable. There are two scenarios in this game, essentially acting as two separate campaigns with their own set of eight missions. The first follows a group of couriers as they try to earn enough money to pay off a mob boss and clear their debts. The other has you playing as a pair of cops as they try to bring down a certain illegal courier business. Each mission asks you to perform a certain task within a time limit, usually involving driving around the open map and collecting something. This could involve collecting bombs and returning them to a fire department before they explode, collecting the ingredients for hot dogs so they can be delivered to VIPs, or even rescue the President from an aircraft carrier. Despite obviously drawing comparisons to Crazy Taxi, in reality Super Runabout isn't a lot like Sega's game and its slower pace and trickier gameplay does make it feel like its own beast. Certainly, there are more vehicles to choose from here, ranging from standard sports cars and trucks to sillier offerings like a motor scooter, a bus, an F1 car, a street cleaner, a tank and even a 'dangerous pig' called Piggie. ■

FACT

The game includes a VMU mini-game as well as the 'Climax Editor', which is similar to an Etch-a-Sketch and lets players use the VMU to design their own pictures and animations.

SURF ROCKET RACERS

Year 2000
Publisher Crave Entertainment
Developer CRI

IT WOULD BE very tempting to just write 'it's Wave Race, pal' and leave a big blank space in this section, but if you're reading this book you likely paid money for it (thank you if so) and so you understandably expect some actual words to be in those spaces. In that case, Surf Rocket Racers is a jetski racing game (or, as the box shamelessly puts it, 'the first wave racing title for the Sega Dreamcast'), in which the aim is naturally to navigate a series of choppy bodies of water in order to reach the finish line before your opponents. There are 15 courses in the game, from the crystal clear blue waters of the Bahamas to the not quite so clear Manhattan rivers, taking in the likes of Rome, the Amazon, the North Pole, Niagara Falls and even a ghost ship along the way. There are also six drivers to choose from, each with their own attributes for speed, acceleration, handling, stability and how well they keep their grip when they collide with something. As well as your typical Championship mode where you earn points for each win, there's also a Tricks & Techniques mode where you take on a series of mini-games (such as jumping into a wall with targets on it), and a Hazards & Obstacles mode where you have to collect balloons dotted around a track and finish within a set time. It's not a bad game by any means, but let's face it: it's Wave Race, pal. ■

FACT

Contrary to some internet claims, the Japanese game Power Jet Racing 2001 is not identical to this. It's an enhanced update, as you'll see in the Japanese section of this book.

SUZUKI ALSTARE EXTREME RACING

Year 1999
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Criterion Games

AFTER IMAGINEER RELEASED the Criterion-developed motorbike racing game Redline Racer in Japan in April 1999 (see the Japanese section of this book), Ubisoft took over publishing duties for the western version. Instead of releasing a straight port, Ubisoft secured a deal with motorcycle manufacturer Suzuki to include its bikes in the game. The result was Suzuki Alstare Extreme Racing, an updated version of Redline Racer that not only benefited from the new licence, but also enjoyed greatly improved visuals as well as the removal of a number of bugs. At first you only have access to a single bike, the GSX-R600 Standard, but as you complete sessions in the main game mode (literally called Main Game) you can unlock a handful of other models such as the GSX-R600 Racing, the GSX-R SuperSport, the GSX-R750 Standard and the GSX-R750 Racing. Basically, as long as you like bikes with 'GSX-R' in the name you'll be in hog's heaven. More varied is the track selection, with an initial three to choose from and a total of 12 once everything's unlocked. These include the sandy, rock-covered roads of Tropical Trail, the snowy shenanigans of White Mountain and the… whatever Tobacco Road is supposed to be. You start off as a novice rider in Main Game and the aim is to finish well enough in each race to make into Suzuki's reserve team, then eventually get offered a full spot in the Suzuki Alstare Racing team. ■

FACT

Alstare Racing is a Belgian racing team that was founded in 1992 by Francis and Patricia Batta. They originally teamed with Ducati for three years before joining up with Suzuki.

SWORD OF THE BERSERK: GUTS' RAGE

Year 1999
Publisher Eidos Interactive
Developer ASCII Entertainment

SOMETIMES YOU AREN'T interested in technical, complex game mechanics and you just want an excuse to wade around with an enormous blade thing. That's the premise behind Sword of the Berserk, in which said enormous blade thing is capable of relieving enemies of their blood in the form of big red sprays. Based on the manga series simply known as *Berserk*, you play as Gattsu (aka Guts), a mercenary who, along with a mentally scarred girl called Casca, is roaming the land searching for a cure for her ailment. The rest of their band of mercenaries, you see, were slaughtered by a supernatural warrior clan known as the God Hand, and witnessing the sheer carnage that took place was what shocked Casca into her current condition. Oh, and they're joined by a fully nude fairy chap called Puck, because of course they are. Initial combat in Sword of the Berserk is straightforward enough: players can unleash Guts' comically large sword at any time with the L trigger, and can then perform horizontal and vertical swipes with it, as long as some basic combinations: jumping and performing a vertical attack, for example, performs a downward swipe that can literally cut some enemies clean in half. The game also has some basic QTE prompts (despite being released 13 days before Shenmue in Japan), with players taking a different route if they fail them. The game was praised for its action but criticised for its lengthy cutscenes. ■

FACT

The game is known in Japan as Berserk: Millennium Falcon Arc – Flowers of Oblivion Chapter, and was presumably changed because it sounded a bit too *Star Wars*-y.

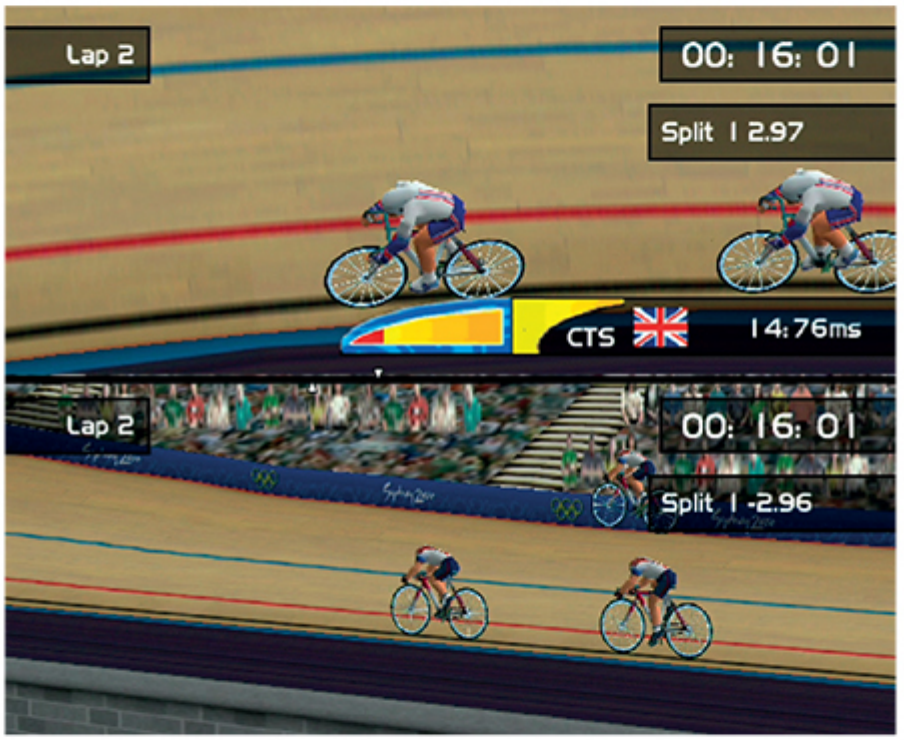
SYDNEY 2000

Year	2000
Publisher	Eidos Interactive
Developer	Attention to Detail

YOU CAN'T HAVE an Olympic Summer Games without a video game adaptation. Well, not since video games existed, at least: there famously wasn't a 1952 Helsinki Olympics game. There certainly was a Sydney 2000 one though, and it made its mark (set, go) on the PlayStation, PC and Dreamcast. There are 12 events to choose from, half of which are track & field disciplines: you've got the 100m Sprint, 110m Hurdles, Javelin, Hammer, Triple Jump, High Jump, Skeet Shooting, Super Heavyweight Weight Lifting, 100m Freestyle Swimming, 10m Platform Diving, Chase Cycling and the Kayak K1 Slalom. While there's a straightforward Arcade mode in which you take on each of the events one by one and try to get the highest total score across all 12 of them, Sydney 2000 does differ from most other Olympics games in that it does at least attempt some sort of player progression too. The Olympic mode lets you enter a name, choose a nationality (of which there are 32) and pick a discipline, after which you get to perform exercises in a sort of virtual gym. So if you pick the 110m Hurdles as your event of choice you have to take part in a skipping mini-game, followed by one called Hurdle Hops where you jump hurdles of varying sizes. Performing well in these increases your athlete's stats, and then you have to take part in qualifying rounds before you can finally reach the Olympic Games themselves. ■

FACT

The United States topped the medal table at Sydney 2000, claiming 37 golds and 93 medals in total. It's not important where Great Britain placed – I can't believe you would ask that.



TAXI 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Ubisoft
Developer	Blue Sphere Games

IF YOU'RE NOT familiar with the *Taxi* series of movies, they're an absolute smash hit in their native France where (at the time off writing) there have been five of the sods, most of which were written by *The Fifth Element* writer/director Luc Besson. You don't need to know French to figure out that this Dreamcast game is based on the second film in the series, but you may need to know a little to follow the plot since this game was only released in France. The story goes that the Japanese minister of defence has come to Paris to sign a weapons contract between Japan and France, but before this he's been invited to Marseille to see how well its police force handles gang violence. When the minister and a detective are kidnapped by a gang working for the Japanese yakuza, it's up to police officer Émilien and speed-obsessed taxi driver Daniel to rescue them, with stunts a-plenty very much on the menu. The game follows the same story beats and shows (heavily, heavily compressed) video clips from the film before each stage, while the gameplay itself is fairly basic city racing which was met with 'bâillements' by critics. Because it was only released in France and didn't get a wider European release, Taxi 2 is one of the harder Dreamcast games to find: not least because if you search for it on eBay you get hit with hundreds of copies of Crazy Taxi 2 instead. ■

FACT

Tragedy struck the *Taxi 2* set when a stuntman drove a car off a springboard too fast and struck cameraman Alain Dutartre and two other people. Dutartre later died in hospital.

TECH ROMANCER

Year 2000
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

CAPCOM HAD PREVIOUSLY dabbled with mech fighting in Cyberbots: Full Metal Madness back in 1995, so Tech Romancer wasn't its first dalliance with the concept. Whereas Cyberbots was a sprite-based 2D fighting game in the style of Street Fighter II, however, its arcade fighter Tech Romancer is a polygonal 3D affair. There are initially nine robots to choose from, each based on a different type of robot genre popular in Japan. Super Defense Armour Dixen, for example, has a design similar to the 'real robots' in the Gundam series, while Pulsion is more like Ultraman in that they're a person who can transform into a mech. Each is also piloted by a different character, who pops up for a chat before each fight in the game's Story mode. This is where the game's longevity can be found, because each character has their own distinct Story mode with their own dialogue scenes (as if each Story is a show starring that character). As for the gameplay itself, fights take place in 3D environments with occasional buildings and other scenery dotted about. Instead of your typical 'best of 3' round system, each mech has two life bars, meaning the aim is simply to empty both of your opponent's meters before yours are emptied. The TV show style combined with the solid combat makes Tech Romancer an interesting fighting game to track down, especially because (at the time of writing) it was never ported to any other systems than the Dreamcast. ■

FACT

Two versions were released in Japan: a standard edition and one compatible with Capcom's 'matching service', allowing for online multiplayer.

TEE OFF

Year 1999
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Bottom Up

IF YOU WERE a Dreamcast owner back in the day and you fancied yourself as something of a golf fan, then – in the west, at least – there was only a single option available to you. Tee Off is a western port of Bottom Up's Golf Shiyouyo (which had a sequel you can find in the Japanese games section of this book), and is an arcade-style game similar to the Everybody's Golf / Hot Shots Golf titles on PlayStation. There are five fictional courses to play through, each with their own quirks. Japan is the most basic course but is fairly bunker-heavy; Scotland has steep slopes, wind and fog; Australia has multiple routes; USA has easy fairways but rewards riskier play with better scores, and Africa is full of water hazards. There are initially four characters to choose from (with a further 11 to unlock), including a chap called Julian Clement who's supposed to be Scottish, but has an American accent and is therefore a fraud in my eyes. As well as a Free Round mode (where you choose a course and up to four players take part in Point Tournament, Stroke Play or Match Play rules), there's also a single-player World Tour where you have to rank as highly as possible against a bunch of CPU golfers. Uniquely, there's also a mode called Gate Ball, which plays similarly to croquet and requires players to hit a ball through numbered gates before hitting a final target in the middle of the stage to win. ■

FACT

The game was initially known as Entertainment Golf during development, which is a title that sort of goes without saying.

TEST DRIVE 6

Year 1999
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Pitbull Syndicate

IF YOU'RE AN American reader you may be wondering where the other two Test Drive games are. That's because they're elsewhere in the book: Le Mans 24 Hours and V-Rally 2: Expert Edition were renamed Test Drive Le Mans and Test Drive V-Rally respectively in North America, and weren't actually anything to do with the main Test Drive series. Test Drive 6, however – which ironically was only released in North America – was indeed the sixth main entry in the long-running franchise. It's a typical arcade racer with a variety of licensed cars: there are 40 in all, featuring such manufacturers as Dodge, Ford, Audi, Aston Martin, Jaguar, Lotus, TVR and Shelby. The game's focus is mainly on street racing, with its 17 locations including the likes of Rome, London, Ireland, Egypt, Hong Kong, Lake Tahoe, Maui and Newcastle. These aren't perfect recreations, more a sort of 'best of' in which iconic landmarks are sort of squished together, meaning if you drive in London you'll find New Scotland Yard then turn right and go straight past Buckingham Palace (rather than ending up in the River Thames, like you would if you turned right in real life). The game also has a suitably 'trendy' soundtrack for its era, with music from the likes of Eve 6, Kottonmouth Kings and Lunatic Calm. The game's main theme, though, is Fear Factory's cover of Cars by Gary Numan (who also returns to accompany them on the track). The song plays during the FMV intro and its full music video can be viewed as an extra feature. ■

FACT

The PC version of the game contains an unused model for a McLaren F1 GTR in its files. There are no other McLarens in the game, meaning it may have been a deal that fell through.

TIME STALKERS

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Climax Entertainment

TOKYO DEVELOPMENT STUDIO Climax Entertainment was probably best known for its Mega Drive game Landstalker, which may have caused some Dreamcast fans to believe that Time Stalkers' similar name meant it would also have similar gameplay. That isn't quite the case, as while Landstalker is an isometric action RPG, Time Stalkers is more of a dungeon crawler with real-time strategy elements. The game follows Sword, a wandering hero who gets sucked into a magical book and finds himself in a strange fantasy world that mixes up different time zones, one where medieval villages and modern Japanese city streets sit side-by-side. A mysterious old chap gives Sword his rather vague mission: figure out what's going on, who created this world, why they did it and whether it's possible to escape. Which is basically an excuse for him to head into a bunch of dungeons and kill a load of enemies. It's not entirely unrelated to Landstalker: because the world consists of numerous dimensions Climax took the opportunity to add some characters from its other games, including Landstalker's hero Nigel, and Pyra from Shining in the Darkness. These characters eventually become playable, and it's also possible to enlist some monsters as allies after you defeat them, making them fight alongside you. Ultimately the game was criticised for one fairly odd design choice: every time you enter a new dungeon all your experience points are reset and you essentially have to start building your character up from scratch again. ■

FACT

Another crossover character in the game is Lady, who starred in a Landstalker spin-off that was worryingly named Lady Stalker. It was only released on the Super Famicom in Japan.

TOKYO XTREME RACER

Year 1999
Publisher Crave Entertainment
Developer Genki

FROM THE LATE '80s up to the turn off the millennium, the Bayshore Route on Tokyo's Shuto Expressway had something of a reputation for street racing. This reputation was so widespread that Tokyo developer Genki released Shutokou Battle, a Tokyo street racing game, on the Super Famicom in 1994. The series continued on numerous other formats, and Dreamcast title Tokyo Xtreme Racer (known as Tokyo Highway Challenge in Europe) is actually the 11th entry. The game's premise is relatively simple: use the money you're initially given to buy a car, then use it to cruise around the Shuto Expressway looking for rival racers. When you find one, just drive over to them and flash your headlights to tell them you're challenging them, and then the race begins. Both you and your rival have an 'energy' bar and whoever's behind will see their bar slowly empty. The aim is to stay ahead until your rival's bar runs out entirely, at which point you win the race and some cash. This cash can then be spent on upgrading your car or eventually buying a better one, and so the process continues. There are over 140 rivals in the game, though given its setting it's fair to say the scenery doesn't change too much. There are also around 30 cars to acquire, but although they're clearly based on real models they have short codenames instead (so, for example, the Toyota Supra is instead called the JZA80). To be fair, I doubt Nissan, Honda and the like wanted to be associated with illegal street racing. ■

FACT

The Japanese version of the game has a cheat code that lets you play as one of the main cars from street racing manga and anime series Initial D.

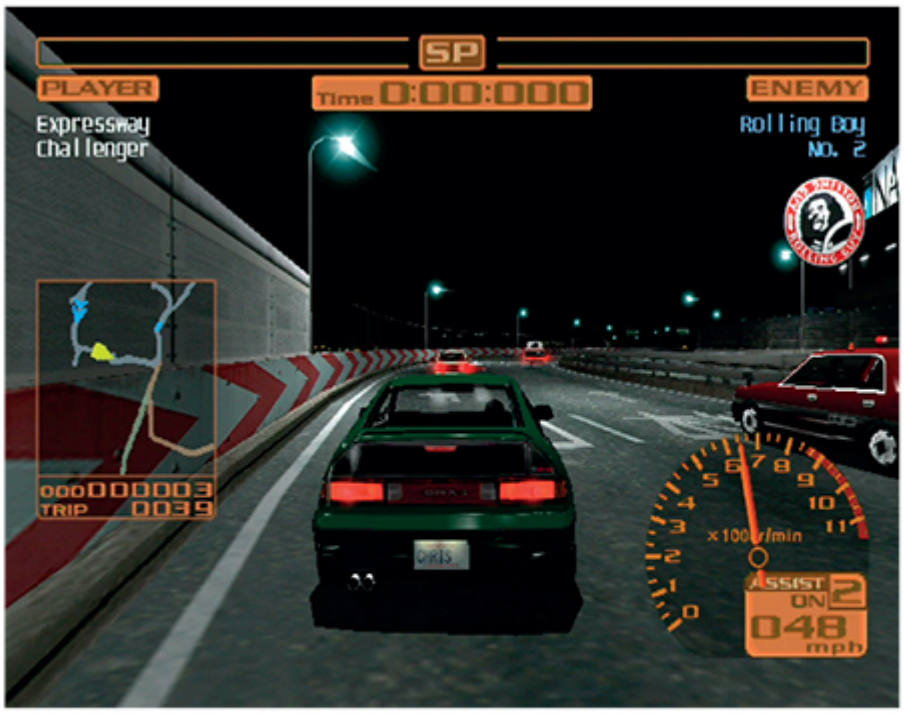
TOKYO XTREME RACER 2

Year 2000
Publisher Crave Entertainment
Developer Genki

WHEN YOUR GAME'S entire premise revolves around racing specific streets in a specific city, it can be difficult to make things dramatically different for the sequel. And yet… nah, only joking, Tokyo Xtreme Racer 2 is more of the same. That said, it still improves on its predecessor in most ways. Whereas the first game let you race on the Expressway's C1 Loop and Yaesu route, this time the map extends to include the C1 Loop, Shinkanjo, Wangan Line and Yokohane Line, giving players more than 100 miles of road in total to drive along (more than six times as much as the previous game, according to publisher Crave). As you race, interchanges and off-ramps now let you switch to different parts of the Expressway, giving you a bit more flexibility instead of having you drive around a big loop. The number of rivals has also been greatly increased, with more than 370 different opponents to find and challenge this time. What's more, some of them now only appear when you meet certain conditions, such as driving a specific car or driving on a certain day. There are also more than double the number of cars available, with around 65 on offer this time, though obviously they still don't have official manufacturer licences. If all this rival-challenging nonsense feels a bit stressful for your liking, the game also has a Free Run mode which lets you drive around Tokyo's expressways without a care in the world. ■

FACT

The western version changes some of the requirements needed to find certain rivals. According to Crave's Mike Arkin, this is because it would take months to find them in the Japanese version.



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX

Year 2000
Publisher Majesco Sales
Developer Pipe Dream Interactive

IN THE WORLD of tactical shooter games, they don't get more tactical or… um, shootery than the Rainbow Six series. Based on the 1998 Tom Clancy novel of the same game, Rainbow Six follows a team of elite soldiers led by John Clark (codenamed Rainbow Six) who are tasked with performing counterterrorism missions around the world. If you're new to the series and you're expecting a Call of Duty or Battlefield situation then you're in for a shock: Rainbow Six is about as serious as it gets with players and enemies able to be killed by a single shot most of the time. Before each mission you sift your way through a lengthy planning stage in which you're given a briefing of the next location and your objectives, before choosing not only which operatives will take part in the mission, but also every aspect of their set-up, from the weapons each is carrying down to which uniform and camouflage they'll be wearing. The planning stage also lets you set orders and waypoints: because you're only controlling one member of a team, you have to give the AI instructions so they can follow their own path while you focus on your own tasks. This all results in an exceptionally difficult game with some of the most complicated controls on any console game at the time. Those who stuck with it at the time considered it a truly rewarding experience, but you may find its control method hasn't aged well. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version also included Eagle Watch, a five-mission expansion pack released on PC which took place in the likes of the Taj Mahal in India and the Forbidden City in China.

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR

Year 2000
Publisher Red Storm Entertainment
Developer Pipe Dream Interactive

RAINBOW SIX WAS such a huge success on PC that developer Red Storm got to work on a sequel. Rogue Spear doesn't rock the boat too much and could be considered more of the same, but for players eager to sink their teeth into more complex tactical missions it was exactly what they were looking for. This time the game opens with Rainbow taking on a series of complex terrorist attacks – a hostage situation at a museum, a potential exploding oil tanker in Japan, a toxin being leaked into Oman's water supply – before the team discovers that all these attacks are being masterminded by Samed Vezirzade, a member of the Azerbaijani 'oil mafia', and that he's getting his weapons from a chap called Maxim Kutkin, who's buying them from the Russian military. When Rainbow prevents one of these weapons exchanges and finds plutonium, it realises there's a potential nuclear attack in the works.

FACT

Rogue Spear was also supposed to be coming to the PlayStation 2 but the port was scrapped, meaning PS2 owners had to make do with the PS1 version.

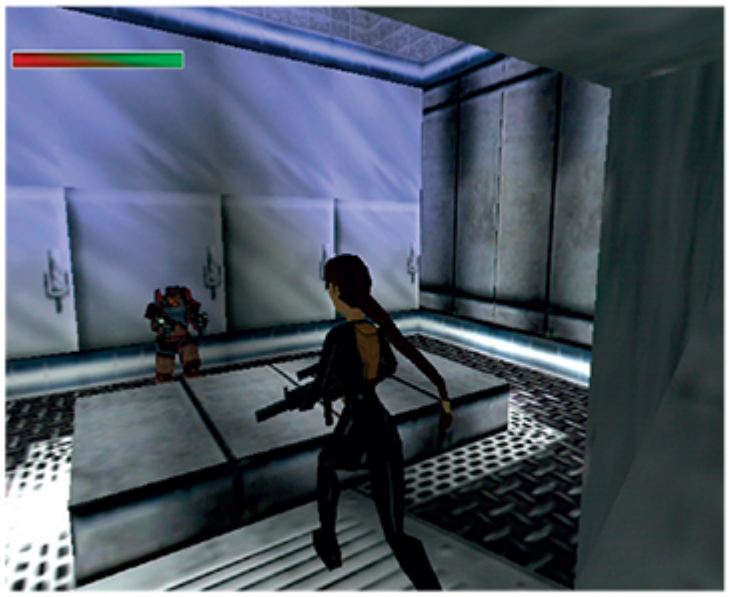
Rogue Spear gives players another 18 story missions to play through, while the Dreamcast version also includes the Urban Operations expansion pack which adds a further seven missions spanning the likes of London, Istanbul and Venice. It's still as complicated as it was before, but this time there's one addition that potentially makes the game easier to get to grips with: support for the Dreamcast Mouse and Keyboard. Since the game was designed for PC in the first place and using a controller is very much a 'square peg in a round hole' situation, this makes for a more 'authentic' experience. ■

TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES

Year 2000
Publisher Eidos Interactive
Developer Core Design

LARA CROFT IS dead. Probably. Sorry, I suppose I should have asked you to sit down before telling you that. But yes, this fifth game in the Tomb Raider series opens with the famous adventurer presumed deceased, buried under the Great Pyramid of Giza following its collapse at the end of the previous game (see the next page). With no Lara, then, how do you make her next adventure? Simple, you don't: you make some of her previous ones. Chronicles revolves around Lara's butler, priest and history teacher sitting around a fireplace at Croft Manor, reminiscing about Lara's earlier quests. You then get to play through four of these adventures in flashback form, essentially giving Core Design the chance to make a quartet of short Tomb Raider games instead of one long one.

The first is a prequel of sorts set in Rome, in which Lara is searching for the Philosopher's Stone while being chased by enemies she would later see again in the first Tomb Raider. The second has her exploring a Russian naval base and smuggling herself into a submarine in search of the Spear of Destiny. The third story, told by the priest, takes place on Black Isle, a fictional haunted island just off the coast of Ireland, and sees a teenage Lara stowing away on the priest's boat as he heads to the island to investigate the reported apparitions spotted there. Cue all sorts of malarkey with demons and dragons.



Finally, story number four takes Lara to New York, where she tries to infiltrate the corporate headquarters of her former mentor Werner to get back the Iris she found in Cambodia.

The idea of these four stories was not only to give the player four separate adventures, but also to try and inject some interest into yet another Tomb Raider game by trying to make the player handle each story differently. The first story feels most like the original Tomb Raider's adventure platforming, the second is focused more on action, the third forces players to go without weapons and the fourth is more stealth-heavy. This aside, the game's short development time – the PlayStation version arrived about a year after The Last Revelation, while the Dreamcast versions of each game were just nine months apart – means it really does feel like an extension of its predecessor without much new in the way of gameplay.

FACT

In a 2019 interview Sandham said: 'Tomb Raider 4 was the one we were most proud of, but [the quality] was dropping down. Tomb Raider 5 was effectively a load of old shit.'

Members of Core Design have publicly stated their lack of interest in making Chronicles: as the fifth game to use a variation of the same engine – not to mention the fifth in only four years – designer Andy Sandham has claimed that the team made the game to make a living, rather than because they actually cared about it. This was seemingly reflected in the critical reception at the time, with some reviewers pointing out that while it was technically the best Tomb Raider to date, by this point it just felt like retreading old ground (which is appropriate given that's literally the plot). ■

TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION

Year 2000
Publisher Eidos Interactive
Developer Core Design

WHEN CORE DESIGN boss Jeremy Heath-Smith first watched the final cutscene for Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation in his office, a loud F-bomb could be heard throughout the entire floor. The Core team enjoyed a great degree of freedom while making the Tomb Raider games, and they had just decided to use that freedom to kill off the company's cash cow. The Last Revelation was the fourth Tomb Raider game, and while the series' immense success was leading to enormous royalty cheques for the developers involved, it was also leading to divorces, stress and mental breakdowns due to the unending crunch required to turn around each game within a year. As such, the developers decided it was time for Lara's story to end. Of course, a flip back to the previous page shows they didn't quite manage to get away with this following a stern talking-to by Heath-Smith, but let's look at The Last Revelation as what it was originally supposed to be: the fourth and final game in the Tomb Raider saga.

Sometimes to end a story you have to go back to the beginning, which is why The Last Revelation's first stage is a flashback set in the mid '80s in which a teenage lara and her mentor Werner are exploring a Cambodian temple in search of the Iris. This is one of Lara's first ever major adventures, and as such it conveniently doubles as a tutorial stage in which

Werner talks Lara (and therefore the player) through each of the moves in her arsenal. Once this stage ends it's back to the present day, where Lara is in Egypt exploring (and indeed raiding) the tomb of Set, the god of chaos. After nicking the priceless Amulet of Horus from the tomb, Lara releases Set's spirit from the tomb and shenanigans ensue.

In terms of gameplay, The Last Revelation is based on the same engine as the three games before it, with Lara exploring a series of environments, most of which are this time set in Egypt. Lara does have a few new moves in her arsenal, including the ability to grab any ropes she finds hanging from the ceiling and swing from them. She can also climb up and down ropes and poles, and can shimmy around corners, meaning she's a little more manoeuvrable, though the tank controls that divided some players remain practically unchanged and the fact the Dreamcast controller had fewer shoulder buttons than a PlayStation controller meant the walking and running controls weren't quite as intuitive. The Dreamcast version of The Last Revelation was released four months after it came to PlayStation, and Core decided to make use of the console's extra power to aim for a frame rate of 60 frames per second (50 in PAL regions). In reality, the results weren't quite up to scratch, with critics pointing out slowdown, pop-in and fog at times. And even worse (as far as the development team was concerned), Lara wasn't dead after all. ■

FACT

A special one-off playable PC level of The Last Revelation set in Tutankhamun's tomb was given away with copies of UK newspaper *The Times*.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

Year	2000
Publisher	Crave Entertainment
Developer	Treyarch

THE FIRST GAME in what would become an iconic series more or less nails the formula that would be built upon in its numerous sequels. Players are given timed runs of two minutes, during which they're given a list of five tasks to complete. For every task they manage to pull off they'll be awarded with a VHS tape, and collecting these tapes ultimately leads to new levels being unlocked. Of the five tasks in each stage, four are always the same: achieve a specific high score, achieve a 'Pro Score' (which is higher), collect the letters S-K-A-T-E dotted around each level, and find and collect a hidden VHS tape located somewhere secret. The fifth and final task is different for each stage but is generally another collection-based request, be that crashing into five piles of boxes, smashing through five glass maps or grinding over five valves.

At first glance, a game with a sizeable list of tricks may feel like it might be complex but Tony Hawk's control layout is cleverly designed to let players pull off a nice variety of moves without having to memorise anything, while still having enough depth to ensure pros can pick and choose the exact moves they want to increase their chances of a higher score. The four face buttons act as ollie, flip, grab and grind buttons: ollies are jumps and are usually the first thing you pull off when hitting a ramp, flips are brief tricks that can be pulled off multiple times per jump if you have enough hangtime, grabs can be held to build points and grinds are used to travel across rails and lips while still racking up a score. Doing flips, grabs and grinds while holding different directions pulls off different types of each trick, and you earn higher scores for performing a variety of them. Experienced players can then use the environment around them to put together combos with these moves: performing a high jump in a halfpipe and stringing together a flip and a grab in one sequence, for example, or jumping off a ramp and performing a flip trick before landing on a rail and grinding it.

FACT

Activision offered Hawk a one-off payment for the rights to use his name. Hawk instead asked for a royalty deal. The game's success meant that within just two years he'd made 10 times what had been offered.

There aren't many games that are so influential that they can boost the popularity of the real-world subject they're based on, but it's absolutely fair to claim that skateboarding – which had been huge in the '80s but had certainly become quite niche by the mid '90s – enjoyed a second boom thanks almost primarily to Tony Hawk's Pro Skater and its sequels. Not only was Activision's franchise a brilliantly balanced series of high score fests in their own right, but the combination of cutting edge soundtracks and slick presentation meant that anyone who played a Tony Hawk game would more often than not come away with the impression that the skateboarding scene was cool as hell, and may even have been tempted to find a skate park near them. ■

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Activision
Developer	Treyarch

IF YOU THOUGHT that Activision wasn't going to capitalise on the enormous success of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater by releasing a second game, you must have landed on your noggin after one too many 720 varial McTwists. It was a rather odd situation for Dreamcast owners, though: because the port of the first game arrived on Sega's console so late, the sequel was released a mere six months later, bringing a second helping of skateboarding action almost as quickly as it takes to recover from breaking your leg on a halfpipe.

The general structure is the same in Pro Skater 2, but practically every element of the game is a significant improvement over its predecessor. Once again you have to perform tasks on each stage but this time there are 10 of them instead of just five, and more of them are specific to that level now. Take the Venice Beach stage, for example, which gives you the typical goals – high score, pro score, sick score, hidden tape and S-K-A-T-E letters – but also asks you to perform a tailslide on a specific ledge, collect five spray cans, hit four specific gaps and jump over the teleporting 'Magic Bum' five times (look, jumping over homeless people was acceptable back then. Okay, it wasn't).

Instead of simply awarding players with tapes for completing each task, this time the game gives players cold, hard cash, with different amounts depending on how difficult each task is. This time you have to hit certain cash targets to unlock new stages, and there's also cash dotted around each level in case you're struggling to hit certain tasks but still want to be able to access the next area. The cash also has another purpose, in that you can use it to buy stat upgrades for your skater, improving such traits as speed, spinning, grinding balance and jumping height. For the first time you can also create your own character: combined with the new cash-earning mechanic there was greater scale for customising the game's feel to your own personal skating style.

FACT

While making the first game, Activision sent Hawk a modded PlayStation and frequently sent him new builds of the game in progress. Hawk secretly made copies for his friends with modded consoles.

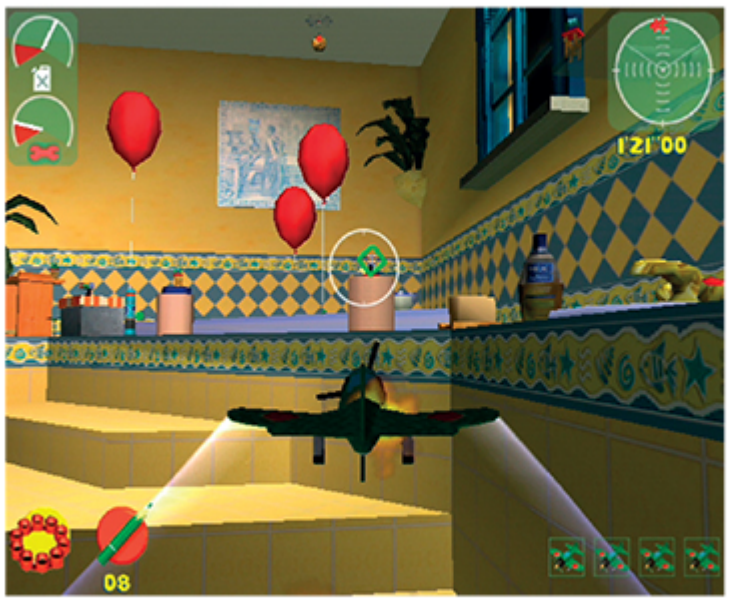
By far the most transformative addition to the second game, however, is the new 'manual' move, which can be performed at any time by hitting Up, Down (or Down, Up) while skating on the ground. This essentially turns any surface into a grind, where you have to balance as you rack up more points the longer it lasts. This gave expert players far greater scale for potential combos, because now jumps no longer needed rails between them to keep a combo going: now you could just pull off a manual when hitting the ground and, assuming you had enough momentum, could carry it on to the next jump. The manual alone gave Pro Skater 2 significantly more freedom than its predecessor, and while the third game (which didn't come to Dreamcast) completed the evolution by adding the equally important revert move, there's a reason why Pro Skater 2 sits at a score of 98 on Metacritic. ■

TOY COMMANDER

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	No Cliche

WHAT DO YOUR toys do when you're not around? It's a completely original idea that's never been done before (just ignore the Toy Story game on the next page), and Toy Commander puts its own spin on things with a toy-based action game. The plot centres around a young lad who's just been given a bunch of toy soldiers and other army-related toys for Christmas, much to the annoyance of his older toys who feel like they're losing control of the house. Before you start phoning Disney's lawyers, here's the twist: the older toys are the bad guys in this particular story, because rather than putting up with the new toys' arrival, they instead decide to stage a mutiny. Led by Huggy Bear, the lad's very first toy, a group of generals are appointed to each room of the house in an attempt to retain control. It's up to you, as the commander of the new army toys, to take out the hostile natives and claim your rightful place as settlers.

Each of the house's seven rooms contains seven separate missions, most of which are tests designed to challenge the army toys' capabilities. If you manage to clear four of these within their set time limits you'll unlock the ability to take on that room's general in a boss fight, and if you beat them they'll reluctantly join your side, making the final boss fight against Huggy Bear easier. Because the game does the typical toy-based trickery of putting you in enormous rooms where simple things like apples end up looking larger than boulders, some of these missions are tasks that would be considered easy for a human to do but challenging for a toy. The first, for example, asks you to drop some eggs into a pot of water and turn on the hob to start boiling them: not a problem for a person, but significantly trickier if you're controlling a small plane or tank.



FACT

The boy's name is Andrew Guthy… as in Andy. Just in case the idea of toys coming to life wasn't already on the nose enough.

Which brings me neatly to the game's other main gimmick: Toy Commander is a vehicle-based action game. Although the game's box claims that there are 35 vehicles in there, in reality most of these perform similar tasks and can generally be split into three categories: air-based (planes, helicopters and the like), ground-based (jeeps, trucks, tanks) and transport (larger trucks, vans). Each of the game's stages chooses a specific selection of vehicles which you can switch between at will, as long as your current one is stationary: so if you want to send a plane over a dangerous area first and take out some of the threats with your guns and missiles, you need to find a safe place to land it before you can switch to a transport vehicle and pick up troops or materials from that area. Toy Commander was criticised for its occasionally annoying handling and the fact that some missions have quite vague descriptions, but for the most part it was well received for its concept and its interesting stages. ■

TOY RACER

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	No Cliche

TOY COMMANDER WAS something of a success and so developer No Cliché got to work on this spin-of, which does what it says on the tin… sort of. It is indeed a racing game that uses the Toy Commander engine, giving players a choice of 24 different toy vehicles: there's a rally car, an F1 car, a buggy, a couple of tanks, a taxi, a bulldozer, that sort of thing. Weapons are suitably teensy, including pencil rockets and thumbtacks, while the four tracks available to choose from carry on the whole 'toy' idea, albeit in a more surrealist manner: they're quite twisty and abstract but you can still just about realise you're racing on a kitchen table, on a bathroom floor, in a child's bedroom and in a shed. What makes the game less appealing to some players is the complete lack of any AI opponents in single-player mode: that's because Toy Racer was released with multiplayer racing entirely in mind, be that up to four players locally or online via the Dreamcast's dial-up capabilities. Solo players, then, are stuck with practice 'races' where they race on the track alone and try to better their own times. Before you start getting all angry on 2000-era Dreamcast players' behalfs, though, consider this: Toy Racer was only released in Europe, and was sold for a mere £5 with £1 of that going to charities including the ELSPA Entertainment Software Charity in the UK, a children's hospital in Vienna, and a children's cerebral palsy charity in France. ■

FACT

The game ended up raising £50,000 in the UK, which means it must have sold 50,000 copies in the UK alone: not bad considering only around a million Dreamcasts were sold in Europe.

TOY STORY 2: BUZZ LIGHTYEAR TO THE RESCUE

Year	2000
Publisher	Activision
Developer	Traveller's Tales

THIS TOY COMMANDER and Toy Racer stuff is all well and good, but what about the big dog in the rather niche yard that was 'entertainment properties about toys coming to life'? Toy Story 2 is a tie-in based on the 1999 movie of the same name, and generally follows the plot of the movie from Buzz Lightyear's point of view (so in other words, it tends to ignore all the stuff about Woody meeting his Roundup gang and trying to escape).
The game starts briefly in Andy's house before Buzz heads off on his quest to find Woody, an adventure that takes him through the likes of Andy's neighbourhood, a construction yard, Al's Toy Barn, an elevator shaft, Al's penthouse apartment and the airport before facing off against Stinky Pete the Prospector in the game's final battle.
The gameplay is standard 3D platforming fare, with Buzz able to perform a double-jump – thanks to his retractable wings – and use a spin attack and his wrist laser to damage enemies (even though his laser should be harmless: an outrageous error). Movie tie-ins tended to get a bad reputation at the time (and still do now, to be fair), and tie-ins based on kids' movies were often particularly poor, but Toy Story 2 was at least acknowledged for delivering a solid enough 3D platforming adventure, accomplished due in part to the fact that it was developed by UK studio Traveller's Tales, who rarely put a foot wrong in the platform game genre. ■

FACT

Most main characters in the game are voiced by their movie actors (including Tim Allen, Joan Cusak and Kelsey Grammer). The main exception is Woody, who's voiced by Tom Hanks' brother Jim.

TRICKSTYLE

Year 1999
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Criterion Games

BEFORE IT BECAME known for its sterling work on the Burnout and Need for Speed series, British developer Criterion's most notable game was TrickStyle, a Dreamcast launch title in the west. The game is a futuristic racer which seemingly takes some inspiration from its fellow British studio Psygnosis and its Wipeout games, but adds plenty of its own flavour to make it feel unique in its own right. The most obvious example of this is the game's vehicle of choice, a special hovering skateboard called the Hover-Ride. Set in the twenty-second century, TrickStyle's world is one of corporate dominance, where a global government called the OWC gives its people anything they want, in return for complete obedience. The public started taking on hoverboarding to give themselves something to do, and sensing a potential rebellion the OWC turned it into a tournament called TrickStyle, in which the winner would become mayor of a world city of their choice. Cue a group of racers from all over the world turning up to complete. TrickStyle is mainly split into two parts, races and challenges. The races do what you'd expect, and you need to win all six in each country (the US, UK and Japan) and beat their bosses to complete the game. The challenges, meanwhile, have you trying to take on four different types of tasks – from collecting orbs to racing through gates – in order to unlock new stunts. TrickStyle's title ended up being quite apt as critics praised its style but said it was too tricky. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version has a bonus VMU mini-game called TrickStyle Jr, which has nothing to do with TrickStyle and is just a basic clone of Snake.

THE TYPING OF THE DEAD

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Smilebit

IT'S HARD TO believe this happened, but there has to have been a point where someone, somewhere at Sega, took a look at The House of the Dead 2 and decided: 'Shooting zombies is all well and fun, but what if we swapped the gun out… for a keyboard?' The result of such a bizarre concept is The Typing of the Dead, which first arrived in arcades in Japan (yes, with two full-sized QWERTY keyboards built into the cabinet) before being ported to the Dreamcast where it naturally requires the Dreamcast Keyboard to be played. The game is exactly as described: a port of The House of the Dead 2, but one in which all the shooting sections are replaced by typing sections. As each enemy arrives, a word appears next to them: you have to type this word out in full before the enemy reaches you, or you'll take damage. Standard zombies start off with fairly simple words like 'free', 'slide', 'bang' and 'sham', but as you get better and progress through the stages they start to get a little bigger ('bolero') and eventually you get multiple words and punctuation marks thrown in to up the challenge (such as 'give up' or 'sea of bills'). Eventually you reach the harder stages where enemies and bosses are chucking full sentences at you, like 'burgers for dinner tonight', 'the penguins are angry', 'what time do you call this?' and the annoyingly apt 'Ha! Missed again!'. ■

FACT

There have actually been 10 different Typing of the Dead games, most of which are Japan-only. The most recent is a typing version of 2013's The House of the Dead: Overkill.

UEFA DREAM SOCCER

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega / Infogrames
Developer	Silicon Dreams

IF THERE'S ONE thing you can't say about the Dreamcast, it's that it didn't have a lot of football games, especially in Europe. Sega and Silicon Dreams played a sizable role in this: not only did it release Sega Worldwide Soccer 2000 and an updated Euro Edition (both found earlier in this book), it then followed these up with a sequel which, like its predecessors, was only released in European countries. UEFA Dream Soccer is similar to Worldwide Soccer 2000 in some respects, in that it still contains a healthy selection of clubs: 264 in all. Every team from the English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Scottish and Spanish leagues are in there, as well as every top-fight team playing in Japan and the USA, despite the UEFA branding implying that it would be focused solely on European football. The big news, though, is the introduction of women's teams to the mix: as well as having 56 international men's teams the game has their female equivalents too, and – perhaps alluding to the 'Dream' aspect of the title – you can even have a women's team playing against a men's team. Such chromosomery extends beyond the pitch too, as Helen Chamberlain – who at the time was a co-host on Sky Sports' popular SoccerAM show – joins the game's announce team, introducing each match before passing over to the commentary duo of Alan Green and Barry Venison (which, incidentally, is what people in Edinburgh call deer meat they find particularly tasty). ■

FACT

Before it got its UEFA branding, the game was going to be called Sega Worldwide Soccer 2001. Some early footage with that name can be seen on the Dream On 14 demo disc.

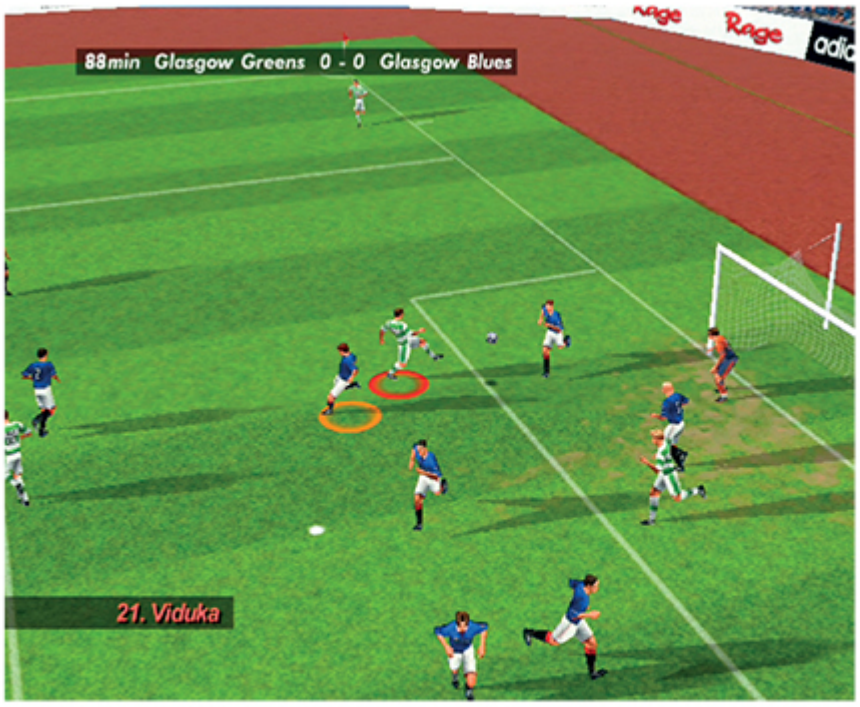
UEFA STRIKER

Year	1999
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Rage Software

NOT TO BE confused with the game above, UEFA Striker is a completely different series. Whereas UEFA Dream Soccer was a continuation of the Sega Worldwide Soccer series, UEFA Striker (known as Striker Pro 2000 in America) is the final game in Rage Software's Striker series of football games dating back to 1992. Originally planned to be titled Ruud Gullit's Striker – Rage spent time with the Dutch football legend as well as other coaches like Glenn Roeder to make sure the game played as realistically as possible – the game's name was changed with the acquisition of the UEFA licence. Not that it does much here, mind you: none of the game's tournaments are named after official UEFA competitions, so the European Championships is instead called the National Team Finals, and there's no Champions League or UEFA Cup to speak of here. The players in the game may have their real names but the 45 club teams included don't, meaning instead of Arsenal, AC Milan and Juventus you've got Highbury, Rossi di Milano and Bande di Torino (and don't get me started on the classic Glasgow Greens vs Glasgow Blues derby). This aside, it does play a solid game of football for its era, and it has an interesting Classic Match mode where you're given eight iconic football scenarios to try and turn around, all with real player names. For example, one has you playing as England against West Germany in the 1990 World Cup semi-final, just as extra time is about to start. ■

FACT

A bizarre cheat code lets you hold the L and R triggers to take control of the ball, allowing for copious antics like moving it just before an opponent hits it, or directing it around the goalie and into the net.



ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

Year	2000
Publisher	Crave
Developer	Anchor

IF YOU'VE GOT any interest in combat sports then you're almost certainly aware of the UFC and the enormous global following it has as a multi-billion dollar mixed martial arts promotion. Back in 2000 the promotion was a mere seven years old and still finding its feet while trying to navigate the constant controversy its violent fights were raising (hair pulling, fish-hooking, fighting bare knuckle and kicking downed opponents' heads were all allowed when the sport first started out). Still, its popularity was growing fast enough to warrant an official video game, which arrived in North America in August 2000, sandwiched neatly in between UFC 26 and 27.

The UFC game features a total of 22 real-life fighters, from then-Heavyweight champion Kevin Randleman to other notable names like Tito Ortiz, Frank Shamrock and Matt Hughes (and if you don't like any of them there's a career mode with a very basic character creator). Every attempt was made to make the most authentic recreation of a UFC event, right down to the inclusion of Big John McCarthy as the game's referee (who hollers his trademark 'let's get it on' catchphrase before each bout. And speaking of catchphrases, Bruce Buffer is also there to introduce each fight with his 'it's tiiiime' gimmick.

The act of putting a couple of meatheads in a steel octagon and making them batter

seven shades of Shamrock out of each other is actually more nuanced than you may think, and as such UFC is quite a complex fighting game if you take time to learn its minutiae. If you come into this expecting a typical 3D fighter in the style of Virtua Fighter or Dead or Alive you'll likely see your character tapping out within minutes. While standard strikes are still very much a crucial part of the game's combat, there's also a fairly in-depth grappling system which has you trying to find the right moment to bring your opponent down to the mat and, once you're down there, apply a variety of holds to make him submit while also trying to stop him reversing into a hold of his own. Given the unpredictable nature of the sport, fights can be epic multi-round battles or can be over in a matter of seconds, and between the 22 fighters there are a whopping 3,000 or so moves and combos to learn.

FACT

In UFC 26, shortly before the game was released, Welterweight champ Pat Miletich retained his title by beating John Alessio. Good thing too, because Miletich was in the game and Alessio wasn't.

It could be argued that UFC's notoriety at the time for being an extremely violent and controversial sport may have had an impact on the way the game was covered in the press. Critical reception was mainly quite positive, with numerous publications taking great pains (pun always intended) to point out how brutal some of the attacks looked. Meanwhile, *Edge* magazine, whose 4/10 score was among the lowest, seemingly based part of the score on this, accusing it of being dull then adding that 'you have to wonder whether titles based on moral ground as shaky as this are actually worthy of featuring anything innovative anyway'.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Year 2001
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Secret Level

THE END OF 1999 was a ridiculously strong period for multiplayer FPS games on PC. Epic Games released Unreal Tournament in November, then just 10 days later Activision released Quake III Arena. Both games would eventually get Dreamcast ports too, albeit not quite as close together: while Quake III arrived in the US in October 2000, it would be March 2001 before Unreal Tournament showed up. It was still worth the wait, though: the game offered Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Domination and Capture the Flag gameplay for up to four players offline (via splitscreen), single players against AI bots, or – in North America only – online for up to eight players. A total of 44 Deathmatch maps, 14 Capture the Flag maps and nine Domination maps were included, some of which were exclusive to the Dreamcast version. The game included full support for the Dreamcast Keyboard and Mouse too, even allowing both players in a two-player match to use them thanks to the four controller ports. Although there's clearly a lot of content to be found in the Dreamcast version, however, when it was released there was still some criticism levelled at it. The sound was considered to be of a generally poorer quality than the PC version, and while the uncapped frame rate aimed for 60 frames per second, the game rarely hit this and often plummeted to a far lower rate, affecting gameplay. Considering what developer Secret Level had to work with though, it was a solid enough port. ■

FACT

Players who subscribed to the SegaNet service provider got two exclusive Deathmatch maps called Megaplex and Outskirts. They can still be unlocked: the method can be found online.

URBAN CHAOS

Year 2000
Publisher Eidos Interactive
Developer Mucky Foot Productions

IT'S A SHAME that decades later, Urban Chaos' protagonist D'arci Stern is still one of a mere handful of examples of Black female representation when it comes to starring roles in video games. That it's still a rarity at the time of writing is frustrating, but it does also highlight just how important the game was at the time. D'arci is a rookie cop who's just joined the Union City Police Department. Many of her colleagues don't think she's cut out for the cop life, but that doesn't stop her excelling at her job as she tries to clean up the streets in an ongoing battle against the Wildcats gang. Over the course of the game she's joined by Roper McIntyre, a mysterious 50-something ex-military chap who considers himself a vigilante, and is playable for part of the game. Things all get a bit silly in the final act when a fire beast is summoned, something annoyingly teased during the game's opening intro instead of kept as a secret. The game is a third-person action adventure in which players explore a series of stages presented as small open-world chunks of the city. D'arci can follow her goal or go off the beaten track and do some beat cop duties, like stopping other petty thugs. Crucially, the game lets players choose between attacking criminals or taking them down and cuffing them in a non-violent manner. Sadly, the game's awkward camera and tank-like controls meant Urban Chaos wasn't as well received as it could have been. ■

FACT

Rocksteady released a sequel in 2006 called Urban Chaos: Riot Response. It was arguably a better game, but it had a different protagonist (a white male).

V-RALLY 2: EXPERT EDITION

Year	2000
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Eden Studios

YOU MIGHT THINK releasing a rally game on a console that already has Sega Rally 2 would be a losing battle, but V-Rally 2 (known in North America as Test Drive: V-Rally) has enough going on to justify offering players an alternative to Sega's arcade-like racer. The game features 16 officially licensed cars along with a further 10 unlockable ones, representing such rally-reliable manufacturers as Ford, Lancia, Mitsubishi, Peugeot, Renault, Subaru and Toyota. There are more than 70 courses to race through, covering 12 different locations: Argentina, Australia, Corsica, England, Finland, Indonesia, Italy, Monte Carlo, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. There are three main game modes, each presenting these courses in a different manner. Arcade mode is what you would expect from the name: it gives you a countdown timer and has you trying to pass through checkpoints before you run out of time. V-Rally Trophy mode consists of three trophies, each with their own group of stages, and the aim is to get a faster total time than your opponents to finish first in the group and move onto the next one. Finally, for those seeking something a little more in line with the real-life WRC season, Championship mode has you taking on series of rallies and competing for points, with the points accrued in each rally all adding up for a total score at the end. Despite an odd bug in which braking sometimes fully revved the engine, V-Rally 2 mainly received positive press. ■

FACT

As if the Test Drive: V-Rally title in North America wasn't confusing enough, the PlayStation version is known there as Need for Speed: V-Rally. Two completely different franchises, same game.

VANISHING POINT

Year	2000
Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Clockwork Games

NOT TO BE confused with the 1971 cross-country road movie of the same name, Vanishing Point was an attempt by Acclaim and developer Clockwork Games to make a racing game that combined the powersliding-heavy handling of Sega Rally with over-the-top spectacle seen in games like Scud Race. With today's eye it looks and plays a little more like a slightly less accomplished Ridge Racer game, but it isn't without its interesting ideas. Rather than simply racing against other cars, Vanishing Point still keeps the other cars on the track but has you racing against a 'Time to Beat' instead, with your final position in each race depending on how close you came to it (or whether you beat it, of course). The game's car roster consists entirely of licensed vehicles, from nifty rides like the 1996 Lotus Elise and 1993 Dodge Viper to rather less powerful cars like the 1971 VW Microbus and the 1967 Mini Cooper S. Despite having 32 cars and 13 tracks, when the game is first played there are only two cars and one track unlocked. This was a decision that didn't go down well: indeed, in an interview in the UK's *Official Dreamcast Magazine* in which he answered readers' questions, director Neil Casini said 'we publicly hold our hands up and admit we made a mistake' about the amount of locked content in the game. 'Once you get past the first few cars the game gets really good,' he promised, which feels a little like damning his own game with faint praise. ■

FACT

In the same interview, Casini said the game's title is a reference to its rendering engine having no pop-up or 'fogging', meaning players can see the horizon at times.

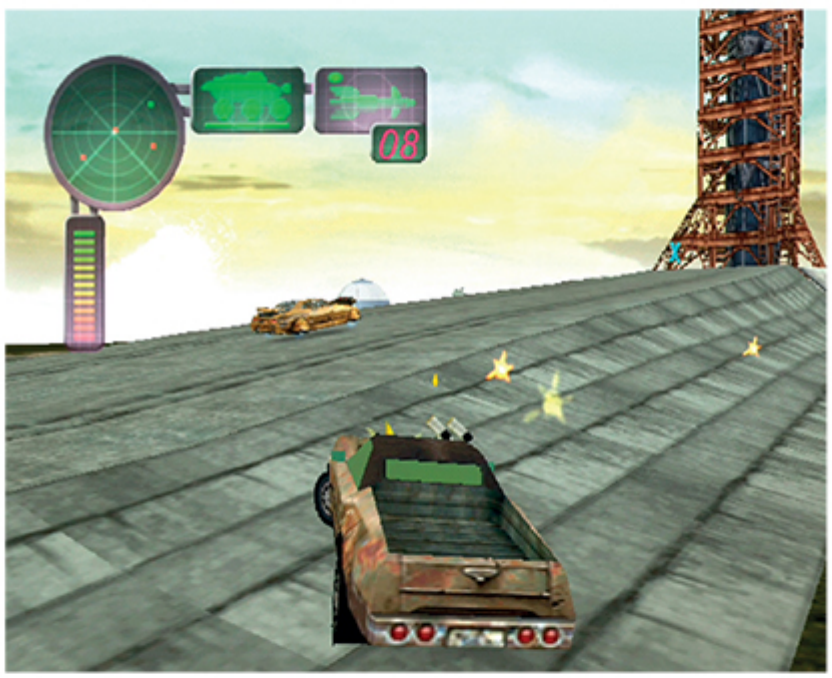
VIGILANTE 8: SECOND OFFENSE

Year 1999
Publisher Activision
Developer Luxoflux

THE ORIGINAL VIGILANTE 8 was released in 1998 and was a car combat game set in an alternative version of 1975. In it, a group called the Vigilantes try to stop terrorist Sid Burn and his gang the Coyotes from causing enough anarchy to let oil company OMAR gain an oil monopoly in the US. This sequel has an even sillier plot: OMAR did indeed go on to dominate the world's oil markets for the following 40 years, and in 2017 the Coyotes' new leader, Slick Clyde, realises he regrets not taking over America when he was younger. So, after stealing some time machines, he travels back to 1977, two years after the first game, to try to completely take out the Vigilantes and help OMAR go on to dominate even more than it did. 2nd Offense gives you 15 characters to choose from, most of whom represent either the Vigilantes or the Coyotes (just in case you're in a particularly chaotic mood and fancy playing as the bad guys). Some of the characters, meanwhile, fall under a group called the Drifters: these are separate characters who don't fall into either the Vigilantes or Coyotes but have been dragged into the skirmish anyway (such as Agent Chase, a 2017 CIA detective who follows Clyde back in time). Gameplay consists of car combat as seen in games like Twisted Metal, though one twist is a salvage system where you can collect scraps from enemies you've destroyed and use them to improve your own vehicle's stats. ■

FACT

The first game let you drive a school bus, but an ad showing it in action was pulled after the Columbine massacre. For the sequel, the school bus was replaced by a prison transport bus.



VIRTUA ATHLETE 2K

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Hitmaker

ALTHOUGH THE OFFICIAL Olympic Games licence is usually only given out to one game publisher, that doesn't stop other publishers coincidentally releasing unofficial track and field sports games around the same time as the real-life event in an attempt to capitalise on the buzz surrounding them. This was the case with Virtua Athlete 2K, which by some bizarre stroke of luck just happened to release three days before the actual Sydney 2000 Olympic Games kicked off. As far as athletics games go it's rather modest in what it offers, with just seven events to choose from: the 100m Dash, Long Jump, Shot Put, High Jump, 110m Hurdles, Javelin and 1,500m Race. Players can create their own athlete, choosing their face, outfit and nationality, before entering them in either a single event or a Quick Tournament mode in which you compete in all seven events in a row and are given a total 'score' to see if you can better your opponents on average across every discipline. Players can also use the game's Network feature to connect online and visit the Data Room, where they can upload their best scores and see how they compete against other Virtua Athlete 2K players around the world. Controls are typical fare for a game of this genre, with two 'speed' buttons which usually have to be mashed with reckless abandon, and a separate 'action' button which triggers other things like lunging for the finish line in the 100m, jumping over hurdles, throwing the javelin and so on. ■

FACT

In 2002 Sega released the arcade game Virtua Athlete, which was basically 2K with a few changes, like the removal of the 1,500m race.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 3TB

Year	1998
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Genki

THE FIRST VIRTUA Fighter is widely acknowledged to be the first fighting game to feature fully 3D polygonal graphics, and as such was an enormously influential title to all the 3D fighters that would follow it. By the time the third entry in the series rolled along, polygonal fighters were far more common (especially in arcades), and as such Sega had to come up with something – other than the obvious increase in graphical detail – that would make Virtua Fighter 3 stand out from its predecessors and rivals. The solution was to make a fighting game that not only had depth, but height as well.

Virtua Fighter 3's stages aren't the typical flat arenas seen in the previous games. Instead, each stage's floor is uneven to some degree, adding an extra tactical element. One stage set in a Chinese street, for example, takes place on the sloping roof of a building, causing players to slide a little when they're knocked down and increasing the likelihood that they'll fall off the roof altogether. Another stage takes place on a subway platform, with stairs leading down to it which can be climbed to gain the higher ground. Perhaps the most complex is the river stage, where the players fight on a makeshift floor made of boats and rafts, in which each floats upwards and downwards individually.

The other major change to Virtua Fighter 3 is the controversial addition of a fourth button. Until this point the series consisted of Punch, Kick and Guard buttons but this time an Evade button has been added, allowing players to sidestep left or right to try and get out of the way of attacks. Players were initially divided over this gimmick but over time the general consensus was that it was a positive feature, with well-timed side-steps allowing players to quickly counter attacks, resulting in faster and more exciting fights. Although evasion would continue in later Virtua Fighter games, the Evade button itself would be removed, making Virtua Fighter 3 the only main game in the series to have four buttons instead of three.

FACT

The first edition of the Japanese version includes a preview disc of Project Berkley, which would go on to become Shenmue.

All this has been about Virtua Fighter 3, however. If you're the perceptive type you may have noticed the two other letters in the title. That's because Virtua Fighter 3tb was actually an updated version of the game, which was originally released in arcades a year later before being ported to the Dreamcast. The 'tb' in this case stands for 'Team Battle', and refers to a new mode in which players can choose a team of three characters instead of just one, with the fight ending when all three characters on one side have lost a round. Despite this new feature, the original Japanese Dreamcast release of Virtua Fighter 3tb was perhaps a bit too arcade-authentic, in that it lacked an actual two-player Versus mode. Instead, if you wanted to fight a friend, you had to start a solo game and have them press Start to join in. Versus was thankfully added in the western versions. ■

VIRTUA STRIKER 2 VER 2000.1

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

VIRTUA FIGHTER MAY be credited as the first fully fully 3D fighting game, but that wasn't the only genre in which Sega was a polygonal pioneer. In 1994 it did the same with football games with the original Virtua Striker, which was not only the first notable 3D interpretation of the sport but was also (along with Daytona USA) one of the first arcade games to use texture mapping, making it look significantly better than any other football game that had come before it. The success of the game in arcades led to a sequel, the fittingly titled Virtua Striker 2, which then received a bunch of arcade updates which added new teams and gameplay tweaks: Ver 98, Ver 99, Ver 99.1 and Ver 2000. As the title suggests, Virtua Striker 2 Ver 2000.1 is a Dreamcast port of the last of these updates, making it the most complete edition.

The first version of Virtua Striker 2 included a total of 24 teams and two hidden teams, but by the time it had worked through its various iterations and ended up on Dreamcast this had grown to 32 teams and three hidden ones. By pure coincidence (i.e. as an almost certain consequence), the 32 national teams included are the 32 teams who featured in the most recent World Cup (France 1998), meaning fans of notable footballing nations like Ireland, Sweden, Portugal, Uruguay and Russia had to cope with the heartbreak of seeing their teams failing to make the cut all over again.

FACT

According to producer Satoshi Mifune, the game ported over so easily from the Naomi arcade version that he joked he was 'almost disappointed' at the lack of effort needed.

As for the hidden teams? Well, they're a little on the odd side. The first is FC Sega, which appears to consist of members of the game's development team. Some of these players have their own odd goal celebrations: one performs a tap-dancing routine, another does a series of backflips, and another jumps into a teammate's arms before leaning back and performing a hurricanrana-style wrestling move on them. Then there's MVP Royal Genki, an even stranger team consisting of little cartoon aliens, with some sort of robot playing in midfield. When you play as them the ball turns into a tiny planet and stardust rains onto the pitch. Finally, MVP Yukichan is just a strange mish-mash of characters, including a handful of mariachi, some Inuit people, a huge snowman, a sort of underwater micro-organism, a large otter and a turtle. Look, I don't know.

If this sounds like something you fancy trying out for yourself, be aware that Virtua Striker 2 is considered by many to be a case of style over substance. As an arcade football game, the level of control offered to the player is far less complete than in the likes of FIFA and ISS/PES, and the mechanics are so 'broken' that it's much easier to score from 40 yards out than it is to score from inside the box. Still, as long as you're happy to learn how to play with the game's control quirks instead of fighting against them, there's a fun time to be had here, especially with two players. ■

VIRTUA TENNIS

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Hitmaker

VIRTUA STRIKER MAY be better known for its graphics than its gameplay, but the same certainly can't be said for Sega's take on a different ball-based sport. Like its soccer sibling, Virtua Tennis (or Power Smash as it's known in Japan) started off as an arcade game before getting a near-perfect home port on the Dreamcast, but whereas Virtua Striker 2 was considered by most critics to be sorely lacking in player control and was a distant competitor in a home market dominated by EA and Konami's football games, the complete opposite was the case with Virtua Tennis, which quickly gained a reputation among many as the best tennis game released on any home console to date.

Virtua Tennis has a fairly modest selection of real-life tennis stars to choose from, with eight in total, all of whom are male: Tim Henman, Tommy Haas, Jim Courier, Thomas Johansson, Yevgeny Kafelnikov, Carlos Moya, Mark Philippoussis and Cédric Pioline. By playing the World Circuit mode you can buy eight more fictional players, then there are two more – King and Master – who are hidden unlockables and the best players in the game. As in real life, each player has their own particular strengths, meaning it's best to choose the one that best suits your playing style. Philippoussis, for example, has the most powerful serve in the game, while Henman specialises in volleys and is therefore better for players who prefer to position themselves closer to the net.

FACT

If you have the Fishing Controller for Sega Bass Fishing, you can actually swing it as a tennis racquet in Virtua Tennis, long before Wii Sports made the idea more popular.

On paper, it looks like Virtua Tennis should be lacking in depth. Due to its arcade roots, the game is played with just two buttons: one for normal strokes, and one for lobs. And yet, by boiling the game down to these two commands it filters out all the needless fluff – who actually used the weaker 'slice' button in other tennis games anyway? – and makes players focus on the far more important aspect of the sport, ball and player positioning. The longer you hold the button the more powerful the shot is, and the longer you hold towards the side, front or back of the court the more your shot will be aimed in that direction. In that sense, getting in position early is the key to delivering strong shots to the corners of the court, while being caught off-guard and only just reaching the ball in time means you're usually only able to pull off a weak hit down the middle. By focusing less on stroke types and more on stroke mastery, the game nails that ever elusive 'easy to learn, hard to master' target.

That's not to say there isn't variety, though. The World Circuit mode not only gives you a lengthy series of tournaments to play through, it also lets you build your player with a series of brilliant novelty mini-games, from a hugely compelling ten-pin bowling one where you have to serve the ball into the pins, to one where you have to hit smashes to clear a stack of cardboard boxes completely off the court. ■

VIRTUA TENNIS 2

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Hitmaker

GIVEN THAT THE general consensus was that Virtua Tennis had completely smashed (ahem) its gameplay mechanics at the first time of asking, the sequel wisely didn't mess with the basics too much (though it did add a slice shot, despite what I said in the last entry). Courier, Johansson and Philippoussis were dropped from the roster and replaced by Pat Rafter, Thomas Enqvist and Magnus Norman. More importantly for the sequel, though, the eight other generic male players were replaced by eight real-life female ones, bringing women's tennis to the series for the first time. The female roster is US-heavy, with Venus and Serena Williams, Lindsay Davenport and Monica Seles making up half of it. Joining them are Mary Pierce, Jelena Dokic, Alexandra Stevenson and Arantxa Sánchez-Vicario. An entirely revamped World Tour mode has players making their own male and female player, both of whom start at rank 300, and putting them both through a calendar of events taking place over a number of years, with opportunities to pair them together in mixed doubles tournaments along the way. The training mini-games return to let you build your stats in an entertaining manner, and the inclusion of more than 25 courts keeps things varied. North American players also saw another major change: the Virtua Tennis name was dropped there and the game was renamed Tennis 2K2, to put it in line with the other Sega Sports games like NHL 2K2, NBA 2K2 and NFL 2K2. ■

FACT

The game was ported to the PS2 at the end of 2002. To avoid confusing American players by calling it Tennis 2K3, Sega instead just called the NTSC version Tennis. That's it, just Tennis.

WACKY RACES

Year	2000
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Infogrames Sheffield House

KARTING GAMES BASED on licensed properties may be a common occurrence, but it's rare that a franchise is as perfectly suited for the genre as Wacky Races is. After all, the classic '60s Hanna-Barbera cartoon series was literally about a bunch of colourful characters racing each other in their own kart-like vehicles and engaging in all manner of dirty tricks to get the upper hand: it was basically doing Mario Kart more than 20 years before Mario Kart even existed. Naturally, then, a developer would really have to put in a lot of work to get a Wacky Races game wrong, which is why Infogrames' effort is unsurprisingly solid. All 11 racers from the show are available (though some have to be unlocked), from Penelope Pittstop in her Compact Pussycat car, to the Gruesome Twosome in their Creepy Coupe, to the annoyingly smug Peter Perfect in his Turbo Terrific. And yes, of course the game wouldn't be complete without Dick Dastardly and his trusty canine chum Muttley in their Mean Machine. Each racer has three weapons specific to them, which are assigned to the B, X and Y buttons, but rather than letting you collect them and fire them off willy-nilly, the game instead makes you pay for them with Wacky Tokens, which are dotted around each track. By collecting enough Wacky Tokens you can activate the weapon of your choice, giving you the benefit of having the exact power-up you need at the right time but with the caveat that you need to be frugal with your Tokens. ■

FACT

The original show consisted of 34 races, and everyone won at least three of them except for Dastardly and Muttley, who never even finished in the top three at any time.

WALT DISNEY WORLD QUEST: MAGICAL RACING TOUR

Year	2000
Publisher	Eidos Interactive
Developer	Crystal Dynamics

MAKING A KARTING game with Disney characters should really be a no-brainer on paper. Grab Mickey, Donald, Goofy and the usual suspects, jam them all into tiny cars and set them loose in a bunch of inoffensive, colourful tracks. Job done, collect money, go home. In a sense, then, Eidos and Crystal Dynamics should be commended for not taking the easy road (pun always intended) and instead making a racing game that defies convention at every possible junction. Magical Racing Tour is set in the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, and opens with Chip 'n Dale discovering the special Fireworks Machine that's used to launch the magical, pixie dust-covered fireworks that explode over the park every night. When Dale accidentally drops some acorns into the machine it explodes, scattering its pieces all over the park. Chip 'n Dale gather some friends and decide to race round Walt Disney World in their karts, in an attempt to collect all the parts again before night falls.

So, which pals have they rounded up? Mickey and the gang? Their fellow Saturday morning cartoon chums like Darkwing Duck and company? Um, not quite. Other than Chip 'n Dale (and an unlockable Jiminy Cricket), the other 10 racers in the game are completely original characters who had never been in a Disney movie or TV show before, and have never been in one since. That's right kids, this is finally your chance to take control of… um, sheriff bear Moe Whiplash, or a young explorer duck called Oliver Chickly III, or a child actress dog thing called Amanda Sparkle. Quite who it was that decided that a Disney racing game should mostly be made up of entirely new characters nobody knew or cared about isn't clear, but they at least deserve a pat in the back for having the audacity to think about it, even if it's likely to be followed by a jab in the ribs for actually carrying it out.

FACT

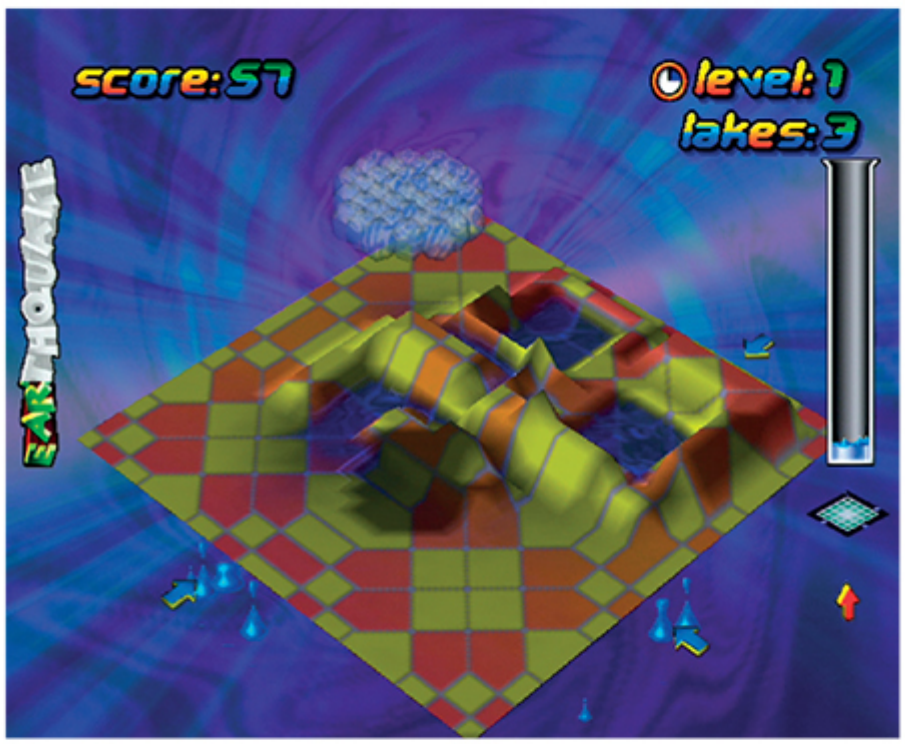
Somewhat oddly, the music for the Dinosaur and Blizzard Beach stages is just copied over from Gex 2 and 3, which were also developed by Crystal Dynamics.

The courses are at least themed on something Disney related: in this case, the various rides which can be found at Walt Disney World. There are 13 in total covering Big Thunder Mountain, Haunted Mansion, Jungle Cruise, Pirates of the Caribbean, Space Mountain, the Tomorrowland Speedway, the Rock 'n Roller Coaster (albeit with no Aerosmith here), Dinosaur, Blizzard Beach, Splash Mountain, Typhoon Lagoon, Disney Studios and the Test Track from Epcot. Naturally, the tracks only share a theme with the real-life rides: there would be no fun in 'racing' on the Big Thunder Mountain ride itself, so instead its course is a desert track containing numerous train tracks and caves. Ultimately, critical consensus was that Walt Disney World Quest was an interesting karting game with good track design and music, but the high difficulty level of the AI opponents coupled with that bizarre decision to introduce an almost entirely original cast meant it couldn't quite cement itself as a strong example of the kart racing genre. ■

WETRIX+

Year 1999
Publisher Xicat Interactive / Take 2
Developer Zed Two / Imagineer

RAINSTORMS ARE LOVELY to look at, but they can do devastating damage if they aren't properly contained. That's the driving force (probably) behind Wetrix+, a Dreamcast puzzle game that tasks you with making sure the elements don't get out of control. You start off with a perfectly flat piece of land, and then take control of different modifier pieces as they fall from the sky, Tetris style. Some of these pieces are Uppers, which raise the land they touch, while others are Downers (which obviously lower it). Before long you'll get a Water Bubble piece, which makes a body of water appear when it hits the ground: the aim, then, is to use the Uppers and Downers to mould the land in such a way that you can make walls which contain the water in a little pool or river when it lands. If any water falls off the edge of the stage, you'll start to fill a 'drain' meter, and it's Game Over if that reaches its limit. In order to calm things down a bit there are occasional Fireball pieces: drop these in a body of water and it'll cause the water to evaporate, but if you mess up and drop one on land by mistake it'll do damage. Speaking of damage, you'll also get a Bomb piece every now and then: these are the opposite of Fireballs in that if you drop them in water, they'll blow a hole in the floor and the water may pour out. The whole thing's massively stressful, basically. ■



FACT

Wetrix was conceived when John and Ste Pickford were making a game called Vampire Circus and loved the water effects so much they felt they deserved their own game. Vampire Circus became Taz Express.

WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?

Year 2000
Publisher Eidos Interactive
Developer Hothouse Creations

AS ONE OF the most popular TV shows at the turn of the millennium, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* saw a number of video game adaptations: one of these was released for the Dreamcast, though only in the UK and France. Each version is voiced by their respective real-life TV hosts (Chris Tarrant for the British game and Jean-Pierre Foucault for the French one), while the show format, art design and theme music are all lifted directly from the show for authenticity. You can even use your three lifelines, though the 'Phone a Friend' option is obviously compromised a bit: you end up 'phoning' a pre-recorded voice who has a crack at one of the answers and tells you how sure they are. ■

FACT

The game has over 1,000 questions, which it's claimed were written by the same 'Question Masters' who came up with the ones for the real-life show.

WHO WANTS TO BEAT UP A MILLIONAIRE?

Year 2000
Publisher Simon & Schuster Interactive
Developer Hypnotix

IF YOU'RE DONE with the real thing, there's always this parody version which plays like normal Who Wants to be a Millionaire except each time you answer a question correctly you're taken to a very basic mini-game where you get a few seconds to continuously punch the face off a cartoon 'millionaire'. The human punching bags on offer are Ronald Hump (a parody of Donald Trump), Melvin Dotcom (Bill Gates), Rich Littleweasel III (a nondescript rich kid), Daisey Mae LePlume (Anna Nicole Smith) and, rather questionably, an Arabic oil tycoon called Sheik Abdul Chickpea. The aim is to punch up to a million dollars' worth of damage out of their face a few seconds at a time, but as soon as you get a single question wrong it's game over. ■

FACT

The game is hosted by Egregious Philin, a comedy version of US WWTBAM host Regis Philbin.

WILD METAL

Year 2000
Publisher Rockstar Games
Developer DMA Design

ORIGINALLY KNOWN AS Wild Metal Country on PC, it's fair to say this 3D action game is one of the less well remembered titles developed by Grand Theft Auto studio DMA Design, aka Rockstar North. The game is set on the Tehric system which consists of three planets, all of which have been avoided by humans for centuries because the automated military vehicles created there eventually became self-aware and started destroying any lifeform they could find. The problem is, the machines are guarding vital power cores and the human race sort of needs them for survival now, so one poor human (you, obviously) has been sent back to the Tehric system to try and retrieve the power cores, destroying any hostile vehicles that get in their way. Wild Metal is played with a third-person perspective, similar in a sense to DMA's earlier title Body Harvest. The aim is the same in every stage – collect eight power cores – with variety coming in the types of enemies you encounter, the weaponry available to you and the five different tanks you get to choose from. The Bulldog, for example, is a compact three-wheeled tank which is useful on rough terrain, while the oddly-shaped Cheetah is the fastest of the bunch but can be toppled over fairly easily. As well as the main single-player mode there's also a two-player mode in which you and a friend can choose between four arenas then try to blast each other into small metal pieces. ■

FACT

In an obscenely harsh review, French magazine *Consoles+* said Wild Metal was 'a game to be avoided like the brown plague in Austria' (a reference to Nazi 'brownshirt' stormtroopers).

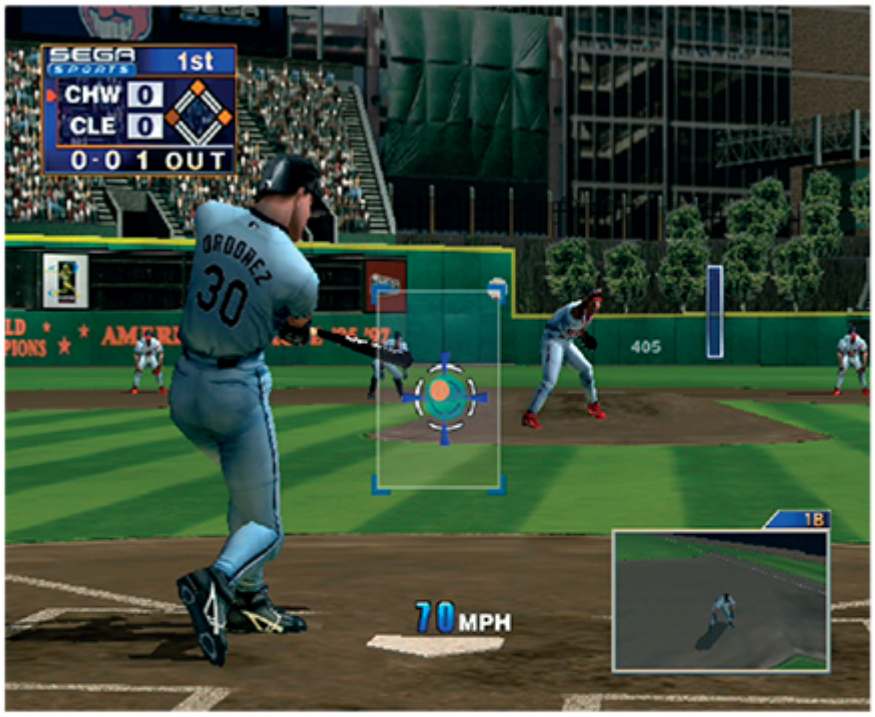
WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K1

Year 2000
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer WOW Entertainment

IT'S TECHNICALLY THE case that Sega's World Series Baseball franchise dates back to the Mega Drive days (the Game Gear days first, in fact), with further releases on the 32X and Saturn. By the time it arrived on Dreamcast after a three-year home console hiatus, however, it's fair to say that the only thing about the series that remained intact was the name and the sport it's based on. Much like the other series in Sega's '2K' stable of sports titles, World Series Baseball 2K1 focused mainly on delivering the most visually realistic baseball game to date, a task it undoubtedly pulled off. The game still received middling reviews, however, because critics claimed it didn't play as well as it looked. One of the major reasons for this was its batting system: rather than simply pressing a button to swing the bat as in almost every other baseball game, 2K1 instead has you holding down RT to prepare the bat, then releasing it at the right time. Since some players are stronger than others, however, the release timing is different for each of them, making for a lot of badly timed swings and foul balls. Despite this, it was nevertheless praised for its presentation, with many of the league's star players recreated in what was previously unseen detail at the time, and all 30 MLB stadiums meticulously and accurately built right down to the placement of loudspeakers. ■

FACT

An arcade version of World Series Baseball was released around the same time as the Dreamcast title. It had fewer game modes, fewer stadiums and games were over much quicker.



WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K2

Year 2001
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Visual Concepts

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE reception to World Series Baseball 2K1's gameplay was far from stellar, Sega put the series in the capable hands of Visual Concepts, which was already juggling the NBA 2K, NHL 2K and NFL 2K series. The result was considered a greatly improved game, with a more conventional batting system and much better pitching and fielding controls than before. Hot and cold zones for batters – which were listed on the box for 2K1 but weren't actually in the game – were properly added here, letting pitching players identify their opponent's weak spots and focus their pitches on those areas. 2K2 also added online multiplayer, though some critics noted that it was particularly laggy, making it difficult to make quick fielding decisions. ■

FACT

All four of Sega's 2K2 sports games were released in Japan, but only through its Sega Direct online store: they weren't released in physical shops.

WORMS ARMAGEDDON

Year 1999
Publisher MicroProse
Developer Team17

THE WORMS GAMES quickly gained a reputation for being great competitive multiplayer games, and Worms Armageddon, the third game in the series, continued along the same vein with similar turn-based 2D combat on procedurally generated landscapes. Each four-worm team is armed with a variety of weaponry, from bazookas and shotguns to more comical devices like the Homing Pigeon, the Holy Hand Grenade and an exploding sheep which runs along the battleground before being detonated. As well as the ability to play local multiplayer with up to four players (or four teams of four, if you have a lot of pals over), the game also gave solo players a campaign with premade missions and a deathmatch mode where they took on progressively more difficult sets of enemies. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast and PlayStation versions of the game didn't include the fire physics seen in the PC and N64 versions, so weapons like the Petrol Bomb, Napalm Strike and Flamethrower were removed.

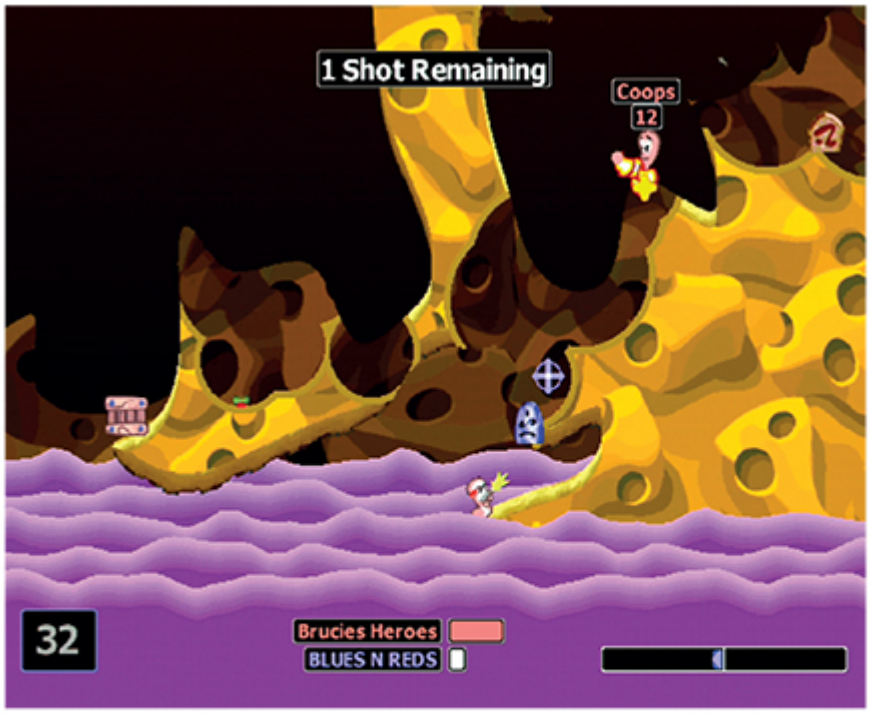
WORMS WORLD PARTY

Year 2001
Publisher Titus Interactive
Developer Team17

ALTHOUGH WORMS ARMAGEDDON was well-received, the story goes that Sega really wanted a version of Worms that supported online multiplayer on the Dreamcast, and since Armageddon didn't, Team17 decided to get to work on an upgraded version. As such, while Worms World Party was eventually released on a number of formats, it was originally designed with the Dreamcast in mind. Naturally, then, the main selling point for World Party was the addition of online multiplayer for up to four players, and given that Worms is built around turn-based gameplay in which only one player is in control at any time, it was arguably one of the best candidates for online multiplayer in an era where lag was often a serious, game-breaking problem. Aside from the new online mode, solo Worms fans also had a reason to buy World Party, due to the brand new single-player campaign with 45 entirely new missions. Despite all this, there was no escaping the fact that World Party still felt to some like the Armageddon upgrade it clearly was, with no new weaponry added and no major changes to the core gameplay or art style (put the two games side-by-side and you'd struggle to tell the difference visually). Worms World Party would be the last 2D Worms game for a while, with Team17 making the controversial decision to take the series 3D with the next title, the cunningly named Worms 3D. This wasn't to last, and a few years later Team17 wisely went back to Worms' flat roots. ■

FACT

To date, the Worms series has been released on more than 30 platforms over the years, from the usual suspects to the likes of the Nokia N-Gage and Atari Jaguar.



WWF ATTITUDE

Year	1999
Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Iguana West

ALTHOUGH ACCLAIM HAD enjoyed a lengthy relationship with the WWF going back to the days of the NES, by the end of 1999 the wrestling federation had decided to call it a day and jump over to THQ instead. Just before THQ released its first effort, WWF WrestleMania 2000 on the Nintendo 64, Acclaim jumped in with one more release right at the end of its run: a Dreamcast port of WWF Attitude, which had already come to the PlayStation and N64 three months earlier.

Attitude is the sequel to 1998's WWF War Zone and shares a lot in common with it, including its somewhat unorthodox fighting system. Whereas most wrestling games have strikes and grapples, War Zone (and therefore Attitude) replaces the latter with an odd command-based system, where players have to enter what almost feels like mini cheat codes (or Mortal Kombat fatality commands) to pull off different grapple moves. If you want to perform a belly-to-belly suplex with Triple H, for example, you have to enter Left, Right, X, whereas a powerbomb is Left, Right, Down, B. Each of the game's 41 wrestlers (43 if you count Mankind's alternate Dude Love and Cactus Jack outfits as separate characters) has a completely different list of commands, meaning to effectively play as a range of wrestlers you have to either commit swathes of button combos to memory or, more likely, keep pausing the game to check the move list.

Speaking of the roster, all the big stars of the time are present and accounted for, so it goes without saying that the likes of Stone Cold Steve Austin, The Rock, The Undertaker and Kane are in there. There's also a selection of unlockable characters, including female wrestlers Chyna, Jacqueline and Sable (the main roster doesn't have any women), as well as stranger offerings like The Undertaker's rotund manager Paul Bearer and, bizarrely, Al Snow's mannequin head – simply named Head – which appears with an invisible body.

FACT

In a double official smackdown, both the UK and US *Official Dreamcast Magazines* slated WWF Attitude, giving it scores of 30 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. The latter called it an 'aberration'.

While its unconventional combat split critics, everything else Attitude did was generally considered positive. The game has a wide variety of match types, going from normal singles and tag team fights all the way up to the likes of hardcore matches (where anything goes in terms of weaponry), cage matches, I Quit matches (where you have to hold a microphone to your opponent's mouth and make them verbally submit) and First Blood matches (where the first wrestler who spills some crimson is the loser). It also included a Career mode that was more in-depth than anything else that had been released up to that point, in which players start as a rookie and fight in non-televised 'house shows', before making occasional appearances on lesser TV shows Shotgun and Heat before eventually making it to Monday Night Raw and pay-per-view events. The Dreamcast port is considered the definitive version, because the console's extra power enabled more detailed textures on the wrestlers and crowds compared to those in the PlayStation and N64 versions. ■

WWF ROYAL RUMBLE

Year	2000
Publisher	THQ
Developer	Yuke's

THERE HAVE BEEN a handful of WWF/WWE arcade games released over the years, but only one of them was released on both arcade and console at the same time. Royal Rumble was developed by Yuke's, which was best known for its WWF Smackdown! series on the PlayStation: this is based on the same game engine but is heavily modified for arcade gameplay, meaning combat has been made much simpler and bouts are designed to be over in a matter of minutes. Also slimmed down, however, is the character roster, with just 19 wrestlers to choose from at first (with hidden fighters Vince and Shane McMahon bringing that up to 21). This was much smaller than the rosters of other wrestling games at the time, but still ticked off most of the usual big names.

There are two modes, Exhibition and Royal Rumble. Despite its name suggesting a typical one-off affair, Exhibition would actually be best called Arcade mode, as it has you choosing a wrestler and taking on a series of opponents until you reach the end and win the title. This mode also has you choosing a partner who accompanies you and stands at ringside. At times you can then hit a two-button combination to make your partner interfere in a number of ways, be that passing you a weapon, interrupting a pin count, or the good old 'jump into the ring and beat the other guy up' routine.

The titular Royal Rumble mode, meanwhile, plays much like the pay-per-view event of the same name, and has you trying to throw opponents out of the ring over the top rope, while others enter the action at timed intervals. Other games struggle to properly implement this mode due to hardware limitations only making it possible to have a certain number of wrestlers on-screen at the same time, but while most other games at the time could usually only handle around four this game can instead display nine wrestlers in the ring at once, leading to relative carnage and, ultimately, a game where it can be quite difficult to control who you're looking at without catching a spare punch in the face. This nine-fighter gimmick also comes into play at random moments during Exhibition mode, where a huge squad of wrestlers will suddenly run out to the ring for no reason, have a bit of a fight then sod off again. At the time of writing, this nine-fighter limit has still to be equalled in a WWE game (even 2K Sports' modern titles seem to have levelled out at eight), but these days that may be more down to gameplay reasons than technical ones. Critics ultimately branded Royal Rumble something of a disappointment, given its relatively small roster, its overly simplistic controls and the whole thing becoming a bit of a mess when the ring fills up with nine wrestlers. Still, it's certainly something of a spectacle to look at when the limit is reached. ■

FACT

In 2000 the WWF demoted The Big Show to its developmental territory OVW, cutting him from WWF Smackdown 2 on PS1 and WWF No Mercy on N64. He's in this game, though.

ZOMBIE REVENGE

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

WHAT DO YOU do if you're one of those people who doesn't get along with light gun shooters, but you still want to play The House of the Dead? Sega's solution was Zombie Revenge, a spin-off of the House of the Dead series (its original proposed name was Blood Bullet: The House of the Dead Side Story) which ditches the first-person gunplay in flavour of a third-person beat 'em up. It's more Dynamite Cop than Virtua Cop, in other words. The game is set in the present day and takes place in a nondescript city which has been overrun by zombies: not just any zombies, mind you, but soldier zombies.

These gun-toting ghouls are the creation of GOD, a government-funded organisation (with a rather on-the-nose name) whose aim is to conduct unofficial research and develop tactical weapons, Their solution is the Undead Solider (or UDS for short), a 'recyclable solider' who is able to carry out their mission as long as they retain their physical form. Things get a little out of hand and an army of UDS zombies take over the city, so it's up to three special AMS agents – Stick Breitling (the son of GOD scientists), Linda Rotta (a young agent who's handy with a pistol) and Rikiya Busujima (whose fists are more dangerous than any gun) – to clear the area of zombie scum.

The game is a beat 'em up for either one or two players, but given the source material it also leans heavier towards guns than most other games of its genre. Players are expected to mix up their attacks between hand-to-hand combat and gunplay, and even some of the zombies are armed (top tip: take them out first). There's a host of weaponry to be encountered throughout the game's seven stages, from handguns and shotguns to the likes of chain guns, laser guns and even a pair of guitar cases which are actually dual machine guns in disguise (a potential nod to Robert Rodriguez's *Desperado*). And in a nice touch, the game's sixth stage – titled The House of the Dead – actually takes you to the Curien Mansion from the main game where you get to take on some of its enemies instead.

FACT

The game has two endings, depending on how you do in the first level. If you don't save Yoko, a girl attacked by zombies right at the start, she turns into a zombie at the end.

Zombie Revenge also includes one of the more fully-featured VMU games on the Dreamcast, the Zombie Revenge Raising Game. This is essentially a virtual pet, albeit one where the pet in question is a little zombie. By playing through the game's Original mode you can collect food which can then be fed to the zombie: this in turn increases the player character's fighting stats when you go back to the main game. The Raising Game also has two basic mini-games that can also be used to increase your stats: a fishing game (where you fish for zombies, naturally) and a game called Zombie Doubt in which a zombie shows you a series of symbols, then you have to find the mistake when shown the symbols again. ■

THE JAPANESE GAMES

ALTHOUGH I DON'T ALWAYS cover Japanese games in my encyclopedias, a Dreamcast book would be considered incomplete if it didn't acknowledge the importance of the console's Japan-exclusive titles. After all, with around 270 games released in the west and a further 340 exclusive to Japan, it would mean leaving out the lion's share of a relatively small catalogue. It's especially important here because the Dreamcast's unique situation made it a perfect storm when it came to importing Japanese titles in the west. The fact that the library was so small in North America and Europe meant players eager to find out what else the console had to offer often had to look overseas. On top of that, it was much easier to play import games on a Dreamcast than it was on most other systems at the time. By simply inserting a boot disc – either by buying 'cheat' discs like the Code Breaker and Action Replay CDX at retail, buying an unofficial one online or even burning your own with a CD-R drive and a blank CD – the Dreamcast's region protection could easily be skipped (as well as its copy protection, but let's keep things above board). Add to this the ever-increasing popularity in online shopping and before long Dreamcast owners were swapping notes on the best import titles.

As you'll see in this upcoming section, the language barrier is an issue for a large section of the Japanese library, especially the numerous visual novels. Just as the Saturn had seen an onslaught of visual novels released in Japan, so too did the Dreamcast play host to a sizable selection of interactive stories, most of which were about trying to find romance. Given the nature of these games, it should go without saying that practically any visual novel you encounter in this section will be unplayable without any Japanese language knowledge, unless you make use of modern techniques such as the Google Translate app (which you can use to take photos of your screen and translate the Japanese text in the photo: useful, if not entirely convenient). It should also be noted that due to cultural differences, some of the subject matter discussed in this section may be considered questionable to western audiences. While I've tried to be tactful while describing these games, parts of this section may still be unsuitable for younger readers purely because of the subject matter involved (in particular, the regular occurrence of games that involve the player trying to become romantically linked with high school girls). It should be noted that the presence of these games in this book does not constitute an endorsement of the content, merely that they're included here for the sake of completion: otherwise the 'every game released for the Sega Dreamcast' claim in the title of this book would be inaccurate. None of this should deter you from exploring the more interesting corners of the Dreamcast library, however. There are plenty of games released for the console in Japan that offer unique experiences not available in the western library, and while many will be impenetrable to those who don't speak Japanese, the entries in this book should hopefully help you get a good sense of which games are more likely to be easily accessible, such as the healthy selection of Japan-only shoot 'em ups and fighting games.

Please also note that there is no agreed consensus on how some of the Japanese titles in this section (or the names of some characters in the games) should be written in the Roman alphabet, and as I'm not a native speaker I'm not going to pretend to be the final authority on this: instead, I've gone with what appears to be the general consensus online. Some Japanese Dreamcast games attempt an English title on the spine but these are often poorly translated and ignored. However, I've put as many alternate titles as possible – including these spine titles – in the index, so if you know a game (or see one listed for sale online) by a title that isn't listed in this section, check the index because the game will be in here, just under a different name.

The Dreamcast Gun was never released in North America, likely due to the aftermath of the Columbine High School massacre in 1999. It was, however, released in Japan and Europe.

21: TWO ONE

Year	2001
Publisher	Princess Soft
Developer	BasiL

THIS VISUAL NOVEL revolves around Takuya Kirishima, a young surgeon who's a bit rubbish at saving patients and is really struggling as a result. As if that wasn't bad enough, a murder takes place at the hospital, followed by an outbreak of a mysterious unknown disease, and Takuya's childhood friend (who's now a detective) asks him to start an investigation to see if he can figure out what's going on. Although it's your typical visual novel where the plot changes depending on the choices you make, 21: Two One mixes things up a little by letting you choose your trust level for each character – trust, neutral or suspicious – which can also affect the plot, as well as the way Takuya talks to certain characters. ■

FACT

21 is developer BasiL's second of three games. Their first was called Bless: Close Your Eyes, Open Your Mind, and their third was Cherry Petals Fall Like Teardrops, so they know how to name a game.

ADVANCED DAISENRYAKU: STURM ÜBER EUROPA – DER DEUTSCHE BLITZKRIEG

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Chicken Head / SystemSoft

DAISENRYAKU IS A series of strategy war games which usually (though not always) focuses on World War II. As the title suggests, this one does too, and is pretty detailed as far as tactical games go on a console. One of the game's main selling points is that its map is constantly changing: after every 12 turns the action changes from day to night, affecting your vision and your hit accuracy, while weather conditions like rain, snow, sandstorms and fog can also have an impact on your plans. Attacks can come from the land, air and sea, and there are over 1,000 weapons in the game, including some that in real life only appeared in the battlefield in small numbers, or not at all. ■

FACT

The game comes with an 80-page 'catalogue' which lists all the known weapons used during the war.

ADVANCED DAISENRYAKU 2001

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Chicken Head / SystemSoft

THIS ISN'T SO much a brand new game as it is an enhanced version of Sturm über Europa, with new content and features. Then new scenarios have been added, with the Japanese army finally making an appearance. The user interface has been redesigned to make the kanji text easier to read, and the CPU's logic has been revised to make each general behave differently. Players can now create their own maps and upload them online to share with other users, and while such a slow-paced game doesn't suit real-time online mltuplayer, you can now play against other players by emailing your save files back and forth, taking your turn each time. In all, it generally makes its predecessor redundant. ■

FACT

In case it wasn't clear, the Daisenryaku series generally looks at World War II from the Germans' perspective, which is perhaps understandable given Japan was an ally.

AERO DANCING: TODOROKI TAICHOU NO HIMITSU DISC

Year	2000
Publisher	CRI
Developer	CRI

AERO DANCING IS the Japanese title for AeroWings, which was released in the west and can therefore be found in the first section of this book. Translated as Captain Todoroki's Secret Disc, this is a standalone spin-off game which adds new features not found in the original AeroWings. The F-104J Starfighter, a much-requested Japanese jet fighter, has been added to the game, along with some new 'special stages' including one in which you fly around a giant house. The game also gathers more than 5 hours of replay data from the best players across Japan and adds commentary from the game's trainer Captain Todoroki, allowing you to sit back and learn how it's supposed to be played. ■

FACT

If you also own the original version of the game, this disc includes a bunch of special save files for it which you can copy over to your VMU.

AERO DANCING F: TODOROKI TSUBASA NO HATSU HIKOU

Year	2000
Publisher	CRI
Developer	CRI

THIS IS MORE or less the same deal as the previous entry. Aero Dancing F was the Japanese title for AeroWings 2, and this is a standalone 'special disc' designed to accompany it and add extra content. Captain Todoroki has taken a back seat for this one and has instead handed duties over to his 16-year-old daughter Tsubasa. The youngster isn't messing around, either, bringing online dogfights to the series for the first time. An option to make the controls easier for beginners has also been added, as has special painted aircraft. The player replay collection returns too, with 170 replays submitted from fans across Japan showing impressive feats, the best combat manoeuvres and funny moments. ■

FACT

The F in Aero Dancing F refers to the change of focus to fighter planes, rather than the jet aerobatics in the first game.

AERO DANCING I

Year	2001
Publisher	CRI
Developer	CRI

WHILE AERO DANCING and its sequel Aero Dancing F were both released in the west as AeroWings and AeroWings 2 respectively, the same sadly wasn't the case with Aero Dancing i, the third main entry in the series. The 'i' in the title stands for 'internet', marking the first time a main Aero Dancing game would get online play rather than a special spin-off disc. Four players can play together at the same time, and discuss strategies in a pre-flight chat room. You can either play co-operatively, or take part in a four-player dogfight battle royale. There are now 50 types of aircraft to choose from, with new arrivals including the MiG-29, A-10A, A-7E and the unique AV-8B (a 'Harrier jump jet'), which takes off and lands vertically. ■

FACT

The AV-8 was considered the 'widowmaker' by some in the military, mainly because of how long it took to take off and land, causing an unusually high rate of accidents.

AERO DANCING I: JIKAI SAKUMA DE MACHITE MASEN

Year	2001
Publisher	CRI
Developer	CRI

WELL, LET'S FACE it, it wouldn't be an Aero Dancing game without an extra disc to support it. This one is pretty interesting because it allows online multiplayer between Dreamcast and PC players for the first time in the series, as well as between owners of this game and the standard version of Aero Dancing i. Two new modes called AV-8B Challenge and Cat Survival add 20 new missions, while four new aircraft have been added including the Su-25, which was voted for by fans. There's also save data for all five previous Aero Dancing titles, allowing you to unlock everything in those. And yes, as is customary, a further 200 user-submitted replays have been included, providing hours of nerdy footage to pore over. ■

FACT

There was only one more Aero Dancing game released after this: the PS2 title Aero Dancing 4, which was released in North America as Aero Elite: Combat Academy.

AFTER… WASURE ENU KIZUNA

Year	2004
Publisher	Pionesoft
Developer	Pionesoft

THIS VISUAL NOVEL has a plot so mad that it really needs more space but I'll try my best. You play as Yuichi, who has died while climbing a mountain. Yuichi's soul can be reincarnated, but the process requires him to replay his memories and decide who meant the most in his heart. The first part of the game, then, is made of flashbacks as you try to decide which of his school friends to fall in love with. If you manage this, the bizarre second part begins, in which Yuichi has now possessed the soul of the girl in question, and has to prove he's alive somehow before his soul either dies forever, or takes over the girl's soul permanently. Look, I don't know. ■

FACT

After… got an anime adaptation which is pretty much all porn, so it's not quite as subtle as this Dreamcast story.

AIKAGI: HIDAMARI TO KANOJO NO HEYAGI

Year 2003
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer S-Neo

YOUR TYPICAL VISUAL novel about a male protagonist who ends up in a romantic situation, you know the drill. In Aikagi (the subtitle translates loosely as 'The Warm Glow of the Sun on her Loungewear'), you play as Koji Murase, a student who's been living with his dad and is about to graduate. One day, Koji's world is turned upside-down when his old man dies in an accident, leaving Koji essentially orphaned. With help from his older sister, Koji moves in with the Hakuzi family: his homeroom teacher Ayane, and her younger sister Chika. You probably don't need me to tell you that the rest of the game involves plenty of chatting up ladies and the like, with multiple endings. ■

FACT

While the Dreamcast version is rated 18 in Japan, it was then ported to PS2 a couple of years later as a tamer 12-rated version.

AIR

Year 2001
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Key

THIS VISUAL NOVEL follows Yukito Kunisaki, a travelling puppeteer who's looking for the 'girl in the sky', a story his mother told him when he was young. Eventually his journey brings him to a quiet seaside town where he meets three girls, the most notable being Misuzu. Although the aim is to fall in love with Misuzu, there's a problem: she's been inficted with a curse that means she'll die if she ever finds true happiness. The game is split into three main chapters: DREAM tells the main story, SUMMER takes place 1,000 years earlier and gives some backstory, then AIR retells the first section but from the point of view of a crow, meaning the player can't do anything as the inevitable tragedy unfolds. Critic Hiroki Azuma has described it as a highly important work. ■

FACT

Air was popular enough to spawn a whole bunch of adaptations, including a manga series, an anime series and an animated movie.

AKIHABARA DENNOU-GUMI PATA PIES!

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Westone

THIS ODD LICENSED game is based on the anime TV series *Akihabara Dennou-gumi*, which was localised in the west as *Cyber Team in Akihabara*. You play as a first-year student at a junior high school in Tokyo's Akihabara region, and the aim is to grow your network of friends by letting your pet robot, known as Pata Pi, play with other people's Pata Pi in the game. As your robot plays with others, various events occur and you'll start receiving emails from your new friends. You can also save your data to the VMU, where you can play a couple of mini-games with your Pata Pi in a virtual pet style, as well as having your fortune read. ■

FACT

Japanese gaming bible *Famitsu* wasn't impressed with this game, saying the cut-scenes were cute but the rest of the game was boring. It scored 24 out of 40.

ALABAMA MEETS WILL VI

Year 1999
Publisher Toyota
Developer Toyota

IN 1999, FIVE Japanese companies launched WiLL, a joint project designed to appeal to the 'new generation'. Toyota released three cars under the WiLL branding, with no Toyota logos on them. One of these was the unusually shaped WiLL Vi, and since it was aimed at people in their 20s, a special Dreamcast promotional disc was given away at the 33rd Tokyo Motor Show. It contains three options: a CG movie shown at the Motor Show, a 'Catalogue' option where you can investigate a polygonal rendered model of the WiLL Vi car, and a game in which an office worker called Alabama buys the car, falls in love and gets lost in a mysterious world where mini-games have to be cleared to escape. ■

FACT

Other companies using the WiLL branding included Asahi, Ezaki Glico (makers of Pocky) and Panasonic. At the time of writing, only stationery company Kokuyo still uses it.

ANGEL PRESENT

Year	2001
Publisher	NEC Interchannel
Developer	HuneX

ANGEL PRESENT IS a visual novel that also has some RPG-battling elements. You play as a budding anime writer whose inspiration is running dry and decides to go back to his hometown to recharge his batteries. At home he meets his old friend Erina, and the two explore the town together. What appears to be a straightforward romance game takes a turn when you come across a small angel who's been hit by lightning. After tending to the angel and making sure she's okay, the next morning the protagonist realises he can jump between the real world and a fantasy world. The fantasy world also has enemies who have to be engaged in battle: these are real-time affairs, rather than turn-based ones. ■

FACT

The game's characters were designed by Noritaka Suzuki, who also designed the characters in cult animated series *Samurai Pizza Cats*.

ANGELWISH: KIMI NO EGAO NI CHU!

Year	2005
Publisher	Pionesoft
Developer	Pionesoft

BUCKLE IN, BECAUSE this is quite a yarn. This visual novel has you playing as Seiya Atsugi, a student at Seiho Academy. One day, Seiya is approached by a mysterious woman called Suzune Merveille, who claims to be the chief servant of the Duchy of Stella. According to Suzune, one of the palace's princes has gone missing, and what's more, she's convinced that the prince is Seiya himself. If that isn't odd enough, Suzune, annoyed that Seiya is quite a shy lad, decides to feed him a special fruit which causes – and there's no delicate way to put this – an overproduction of sperm, heightening his sexual desire and making it impossible to live a normal school life. But hey, that's visual novels for you. ■

FACT

The PC version's title roughly translates to AngelWish: Kiss the Servant After School, whereas the Dreamcast version's title is closer to AngelWish: Kiss Your Smile.

ANIMASTAR

Year	2000
Publisher	AKI Corporation
Developer	AKI Corporation

BY THE TURN of the millennium, Japan was all in on monster-catching with the likes of Pokémon, Digimon and Monster Rancher selling in strong numbers. Animastar is closest to the latter of these, with players raising monsters called Anima and training them up to build their strength, not to take part in battles, but to take part in races. There are around 200 species of Anima in the game, and the ultimate aim is to train one until it's fast enough to win the Anima Master Cup. You can also save data to your VMU and exchange it with your friends so you can race your Anima against each other. ■

FACT

The game was originally going to be able to link to Game Boy Color game Animastar GB using a special bespoke cable, but the idea was abandoned.

AO NO 6-GO SAIGETSU FUMAHITO: TIME AND TIDE

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

BLUE SUBMARINE NO 6 (as it was known in the west) was a short 3-volume manga series originally published in 1967. When a four-part animated series was then released between 1998 and 2000, the renewed interest in the story led to this Dreamcast visual novel. It's set in the future, where most of the Earth's land is underwater due to rising oceans. Most of the flooding was caused by the evil scientist Zorndyke, so Earth's submarine forces attempt to stop him before he destroys the South Pole. The game features animation scenes created by Gonzo, the same animation studio that created the animated series. It also includes music by The Thrill, the Japanese rock and roll 'big band' that contributed to the animated series' soundtrack. ■

FACT

A fan translation patch for the game was released two decades later, allowing players to enjoy it in English for the first time.

ATSUMARE! GURUGURU ONSEN

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega R&D 7

THIS ONLINE GAME, whose title roughly translates to 'Gather! Round and Round the Hot Spring', takes place in a traditional Japanese 'onsen', an inn built around a hot spring. It offers a selection of board and card games, with the main purpose being to play them online against other players. The games on offer are Mahjong, Shogi, Daifugou (aka Tycoon), Napoleon, Sevens, Yukon and Freecell. There's also a fortune-telling mini-game, as well as a cut-down version of one which can be transferred to your VMU. The online mode also features a chat room called the daiyokujo (a large communal bath) for up to six players. It also included online tournaments, to make things a little more interesting than just one-off games. ■

FACT

'Onsen' has two meanings in this title: 'on' means 'warm' and 'sen' means both 'line' and 'spring'. So although it's literally set in a warm spring, the title also means 'online'.

ATSUMARE! GURUGURU ONSEN BB

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Overworks

A YEAR AFTER the release of Atusmare! Guruguru Onsen, Sega released this updated version which for the most part looked and played like the original, with one notable difference: support for the Dreamcast Broadband Adapter, which had been released a couple of months earlier. This nifty little gizmo plugged into the Dreamcast's expansion port and allowed anyone lucky enough to already have a broadband internet connection at that point to connect their console to it, allowing for speeds of between 10 and 100 Mbit/s instead of the 33.6 kbit/s offered by the Japanese Dreamcast modem. Games had to specifically support the Broadband Adapter, which is why this 'BB' version of Atsumare! Guruguru Onsen was released. ■

FACT

In total there were three versions of the game with different coloured boxes: green (standard edition), brown (standard with a free web money card) and blue (BB edition).

BALDR FORCE EXE

Year 2004
Publisher Alchemist
Developer HuneX

THIS ONE IS part visual novel, part action game set in the future. Toru Souma is part of the hacking group Steppenwolf, but one day a hacking session goes too far and when the group hacks into a military server they end up embroiled in a battle between the military organisation FLAK and a terrorist group, leading to one of Toru's friends being killed. To avenge his friend, Toru reluctantly joins FLAK. The combat sections are played from a top-down viewpoint and have you getting in a mech. There's a surprising degree of depth here with around 60 different attacks to unlock and assign. Naturally, in between the action the plot changes depending on decisions you make in the visual novel sections. ■

FACT

Like many visual novels on the Dreamcast, Baldr Force had a PC version that was far more pornographic, but was then heavily edited for consoles.

BASSRUSH DREAM: ECOGEAR POWERWORM CHAMPIONSHIP

Year 2000
Publisher Visco
Developer Visco

DEVOTEES OF THE *N64 Encyclopedia* (don't lie, there are some of you) may remember BassRush, a Japan-only Nintendo 64 fishing game with an intimidating 102 types of lure. BassRush Dream is essentially an enhanced port of that N64 title with improved graphics, particularly when you see the fish up close with the underwater camera. One obvious benefit it also has over the N64 version is that it supports the Dreamcast Fishing Controller, allowing for a more immersive experience (of sorts) as you catch as many bass as you can in the game's six Japanese lakes. There are 10 types of fish to catch, though it goes without saying that most of them are bass. ■

FACT

Developer Visco started off in 1983 and was originally known as Video System Kyoto, so you could probably argue that it should have been called Visko instead.

BATTLE BEASTER

Year 2001
Publisher Studio Wonder Effect
Developer Studio Wonder Effect

MOST GAMES IN this section require the ability to read Japanese in order to get the most out of them, but there aren't many that also require the ability to speak it. That's the case with Battle Beaster, a monster training game that makes use of the Dreamcast Microphone. The aim of the game is to manage your own factory which specialises in raising and battling metallic beasts. There are over 50 different types of beast, and you can hire beast tamers (there are around 150 in the game) to train these beasts until they're ready to take part in tournaments. During fights, the beast's strategy and actions depend on your voice, as you shout instructions and encouragement to it with the microphone. ■

FACT

A sequel called Battle Beaster 2 was announced in March 2001, but was ultimately never released.

BIKKURIMAN 2000 VIVA! FESTIVAL!

Year 2000
Publisher Sega Toys
Developer Sega Toys

BIKKURIMAN WAS A chocolate and peanut wafer snack first introduced in the 1970s. Each included a little comedy sticker, and the snacks became so popular that a number of spin-off anime series were created. This Dreamcast game is based on the fourth of these, *Bikkuriman 2000*, and is basically a mini-game compilation where the aim is to collect as many Bikkuriman stickers as possible by visiting the three areas of Olympus Park and earning coins by taking on the mini-games in each of their buildings. The game can also be connected to a Neo Geo Pocket Color via a special cable, in order to share data with its Bikkuriman 2000 Viva! Pocket Festival title. ■

FACT

Some of the real-life stickers were called 'Head Seals'. These were much rarer, to the extent that Japan's Fair Trade Commission demanded they be made more common to avoid getting kids into gambling.

BIOHAZARD CODE: VERONICA KANZENBAN

Year 2001
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

RELEASED 13 MONTHS after Resident Evil Code: Veronica (the series is called Biohazard in Japan), this 'Kanzenban', or 'complete', edition builds on the game with new features. The most notable of these is nine minutes of new cutscenes which focus more on perennial series villain Albert Wesker, as well as a general cleaning up of some of the existing cutscenes. The Battle Mode, which was previously only unlockable if you completed the game, is now available on the main menu right away, and a new Very Easy difficulty caters for those who couldn't handle the game before by handing them a rocket launcher right at the start. It's the definitive version of the game, basically. ■

FACT

Want to play Kanzenban in the west? Easy. Code: Veronica X on the PS2 and GameCube (and later PS3 and Xbox 360) is the westernised version with all the same changes.

BLACK/MATRIX ADVANCED

Year 1999
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Flight-Plan

IN 1998, PUBLISHER NEC Interchannel released Black/Matrix, a Sega Saturn tactical RPG which had subtle (okay, not that subtle) Judeo-Christian religious themes, a fairly unusual thing for an eastern title. The game was generally well-received by critics and players alike, but while Advanced is essentially an enhanced version of the same game there's a lot more to it than a simple resolution boost. The character designs have undergone a revamp, with artist Kazuhiro Soeto (who was the key animator on the opening sequence for Cowboy Bebop among others) taking over design duties. The second half of the game has also seen many of its plot points changed, and there are now multiple endings. ■

FACT

It was reported in 1999 that Black/Matrix was coming to the west, but the series would ultimately never set foot outside of Japan, perhaps because of its religious content.

BLUE SKY BLUE

Year 2003
Publisher Ecole Software Corportation
Developer Reindeer / EMU

THIS VISUAL NOVEL follows Tomoya Akuragi, a young lad whose mother died a decade ago. Tomoya's relationship with his dad isn't too great, but when the old man gets a job as a weatherman in Hokkaido, Tomoya has to come along too. There, at his new school, he befriends a group of students who have a slightly unusual love of the sky, believing that all people come from the sky and eventually return there when they die. The whole thing's a bit of an odd set-up for what's essentially your typical romance sim where you can try to woo one of six girls. Released after the PC version, the Dreamcast game had all its adult content removed and the story was tweaked as a result. ■

FACT

Although the game's fully voice acted, if you're not much for small talk you can fast-forward all the chat until you have to make a decision.

BOKO YUME NO TATSUJIN

Year 2002
Publisher Fujicom
Developer Fujicom

DO YOU EVER feel like society is constantly trying to bring you down? That's the dilemma facing the protagonist in Boko Yume no Tatsujin, an offbeat mini-game collection which is designed to help you relieve stress by letting you take out your frustrations on some of modern society's most irritating characters. As the young lad walks down the street he's harassed by annoying passers-by, causing him stress. You can relieve this in dream sections, where you get to beat them to a pulp. If you manage this, it somehow converts to the real world where they're reformed and become decent human beings. There are seven people in total to convert, from an arrogant department store clerk to a body-shaming high school bully. ■

FACT

Despite the game's quirky nature it didn't go down too well with Japanese Dreamcast magazine *Dorimaga*, which claimed its 'absurd' difficulty was too hard to relieve any stress.

BOKU DORAEMON

Year 2001
Publisher Sega Toys
Developer Sega Toys

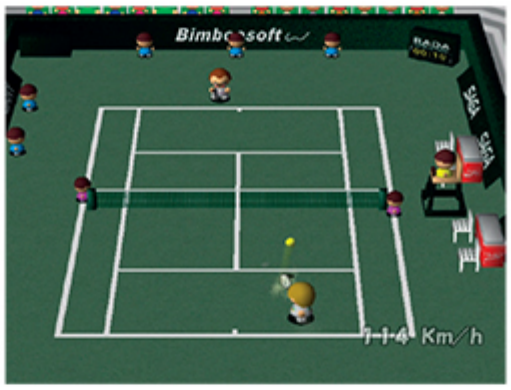
HUGELY POPULAR MANGA character Doraemon only got one Dreamcast video game to his name, one in which you play as the time-travelling tabby himself. If you're not clued up on the manga, Doraemon has come from the twenty-second century to protect a young lad called Nobita. In this game, you have a full year (consisting of 48 weekly episodes) in which you get to explore the world and, over time, make Nobita seem more likeable, with the overall aim being to see him marry his friend Shizuka in the future. In a sense, then, it's almost like a dating sim, but one in which you don't directly control either of the potential couple and are instead a giant blue space cat. ■

FACT

Doraemon uses around 150 gadgets over the course of the game, but a 2004 analysis by a Toyama University professor showed that he'd used 1,963 up until that point.

BOKU NO TENNIS JINSEI

Year 2001
Publisher Bimboosoft
Developer Bimboosoft



ROUGHLY TRANSLATED AS My Tennis Life, this rather odd-looking tennis game focuses mainly on the ability to create your own player from scratch and take them up the rankings. The character design looks more early versions of Nintendo's Mii characters than the sort of thing you might see in the likes of Virtua Tennis, but regardless the aim is to somehow make one in your image then, starting at 10 years old, put them through various tournaments as they make their way through the Junior, Satellite and Pro tours. Naturally, as you progress opponents get more difficult, but you can also build your stats (with 20 different categories) to compensate for this. ■

FACT

There are more than 280 different items to unlock in career mode with which to customise your player, including racquets and shoes.

BOKU TO, BOKURA NO NATSU

Year	2002
Publisher	Kid
Developer	Kid

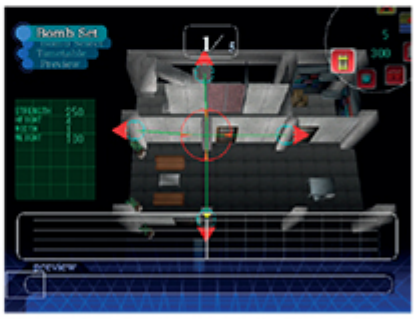
A VISUAL NOVEL about losing your childhood. When Takao Koseki learns that a village he frequently visited as a child is about to be demolished to make way for the construction of a dam, he decides to visit it for the first time in ages. There he meets Kiri, a girl he was in love with back in the day, and catches up with his old friends too. Takao remembers that back in the day, he and Kiri once buried something special in the village, but he can't remember what it is (and Kiri doesn't even remember burying anything at all), so Takao and his friends decide to try to find and uncover the treasure before the village disappears for good. ■

FACT

The game is unlike most romantic visual novels in that half of the game is played from the point of view of the girl, rather than mostly just the boy.

BOMBER HEHHE!

Year	2002
Publisher	Fujicom
Developer	Fujicom / Popo



A LOT OF games have you blowing things up, but rarely with this much care and planning. You play as a planner for a demolition company, whose job is to demolish a series of buildings with controlled explosions. It's up to you to study each of the large structures you've been tasked with wrecking, then place explosive devices in the places where you think they'll be most effective. The general aim is to not only demolish as much of the building as you can, but to also control the explosion well enough to make sure the surrounding environment takes as little damage as possible. As well as 16 outside cameras, there are cameras inside each building too, so you can see the carnage in detail. ■

FACT

The game was originally planned for release on 18 October 2001, but was delayed until early 2002 partly due to the September 11 attacks.

BORDER DOWN

Year	2003
Publisher	G.rev
Developer	G.rev

THIS SIDE-SCROLLING SHOOT 'em up was originally created for arcades on Sega's NAOMI hardware, so a subsequent Dreamcast release was a no-brainer. It's set in the distant future, where Mars has been colonised by Earth for centuries. Aliens have started attacking (aren't we the aliens too?) so the defence force on Mars sends out a special new ship to take out the invaders. The game's main gimmick is its border system, which essentially adjusts the difficulty on the fly. When you start off you're in the green border, which is the easiest, but when you die you drop down to the yellow border and then the red one, where it's hardest. Keeping that first life going as long as possible in each stage is key, then. ■

FACT

G.rev was founded by former Taito staff who had worked on G-Darius. Part of the funding to make Border Down was raised by doing subcontracting work on Ikaruga.

BOUNTY HUNTER SARA: HOLY MOUNTAIN NO TEIOU

Year	2001
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Flagship

CAPCOM'S TAKE ON the visual novel genre thankfully isn't the typical high school romance stuff the Dreamcast was swimming in, and is instead a futuristic crime story written by Noboru Sugimura, who had previously written Resident Evil 2. Set in Neo Tokyo in the year 2060, the game follows Sara Fitzgerald, a bounty hunter who's been tasked with tracking down a crime boss known as the 'Lord of Holy Mountain'. In typical visual novel style you have to make decisions but these come in two flavours: 'Countdown' choices, where you only have a short time to quickly decide, and 'Detective Time' choices, where you get to take a breath, Reflect and think for a bit about everything that's just happened. ■

FACT

Flagship was founded in 1997 by Street Fighter II producer Yoshiki Okamoto. Though it was independent, its startup funds were provided by Capcom, Nintendo and Sega.

CAFE LITTLE WISH

Year 2003
Publisher Princess Soft
Developer Patissier

WHEN A STARVING young man stumbles upon a small restaurant named Cafe Little Wish, he can't believe his luck. He stuffs himself with all the food on offer, then sheepishly realises he doesn't actually have any money. When the cafe owner realises that the poor chap has amnesia and doesn't even know his own name, he gives the chap – who is promptly named Leon – a job to help him work off his debt, and lets him live at the cafe too. So begins a visual novel in which, you guessed it, Leon strikes up a friendship with a number of girls in town and the player ends up getting to romance one of them. ■

FACT

The game got a PC and PS2 sequel of sorts in 2004 called Magical Tale. Although the characters and plot were different, the two games shared the same setting.

CANARY: KONO OMOI O UTA NI NOSETE

Year 2001
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer HuneX

THIS VISUAL NOVEL is about Yohei Hozumi, a teenager who moves to Kotohira in the Kagawa prefecture to live with his uncle who owns a music studio. Yohei attends the Kotohira Middle School and feeds his passion for music by joining the school's music club, where he befriends seven other girls who each play in the school band. Some are singers, others play instruments, but – apparently most importantly in a game like this – all of them are cute and potential girlfriend material. The player has to woo their lady of choice while juggling Yohei's relationship with his uncle, with the ultimate aim being to reach the school festival and perform music with his friends. ■

FACT

The real-life Kotohira has a population of just under 10,000 and is best known for having the largest shrine complex in Shikoku (the smallest of Japan's four main islands).

CANDY STRIPE: MINARI TENSHI

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer WOW Entertainment

GIVEN THAT MOST Dreamcast visual novels are about finding romance, it was only a matter of time before someone pulled out the nurse outfits. Candy Stripe has you working as a doctor at the Holy Angels Hospital, which is run by your uncle. As a medical intern, you find yourself meeting three apprentice nurses, and over the course of a year you have to establish a relationship with one of them. As the back of the box puts it: 'You realise the importance not only of physical treatment, but also of emotional healing, and a feeling of love is in the air. Grow as a doctor and a nurse: can you make their love come true? A heart-warming love story awaits.' ■

FACT

A limited edition version of the game includes a first aid kit with medical records for the three nurses and other stuff like a pill case, syringe and bandage.

CANVAS: SEPIA IRO NO MOTIF

Year 2001
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Cocktail Soft

THIS VISUAL NOVEL follows Daisuke Aso, a talented artist who attends Natsuko Academy as a 'special student'. School life is getting him down, though, and a creative block means he's lost his passion for painting. What's worse, his school has told him that if he doesn't win a prize in the next art competition, he'll lose his 'special student' status and risk being kicked out. If only he had a childhood friend who wants him to paint a portrait of a girl with a heart condition, and if only in doing so he realises that he and said childhood friend love each other. Hang on, that's exactly what happens. Hooray! ■

FACT

A sequel was released on PS2, where instead of playing as an art student you now play as an art teacher, which definitely doesn't make the romance bits dodgier.

CAPCOM VS SNK: MILLENNIUM FIGHT 2000 PRO

Year	3002
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

AROUND NINE MONTHS after the release of Capcom vs SNK this Pro edition was released for arcades, Dreamcast and PlayStation, though the Dreamcast version remained in Japan only. All things considered it's a fairly minor update, with two new characters bringing the roster up to 35. Dan from the Street Fighter series joins the Capcom side, while Joe Higashi from Fatal Fury is added to team SNK. As well as the introduction of four new stages and some general gameplay tweaking, the other notable change is that all the locked content in the first Capcom vs SNK is now readily available from the start: a godsend for anyone who owned the first version and discovered that it took an absolute eternity to unlock everything. ■

FACT

The PlayStation version may have been released in the west, but be warned: it suffers from loading times between rounds and its graphics and sound were downgraded a bit.

CAPCOM VS SNK 2

Year	2001
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

THE DREAMCAST VERSION of Capcom vs SNK 2 was only released in Japan (though the west got it on PS2, GameCube and Xbox). The roster was increased to 48 characters: Team Capcom was improved with the likes of Eagle and Yun from Street Fighter, Maki and Rolento from Final Fight and young Kyosuke from Rival Schools. Team SNK, meanwhile, added the likes of the hefty cannon ball wielding Chang from The King Of Fighters and Rock Howard from Fatal Fury. The sequel goes for Street Fighter style 6-button controls (compared to the 4-button original) and while it keeps the first game's ratio system, players now get 4 ratio points and can apply them to strengthen whatever character they like. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version can use a Neo Geo Pocket Color link cable to connect with the handheld game SNK vs Capcom Card Fighters Clash and unlock new content.

CARD OF DESTINY: HIKARI TO YAMI NO TOUGOUMONO

Year	2002
Publisher	Abel Software
Developer	Abel Software

DESCRIBED ON THE back of the box as 'an RPG that's a little bit sexy', Card of Destiny (the subtitle loosely translates to Unifier of Light and Darkness) is a fantasy adventure with a card-based battle system. The game takes place during a brutal war, in which two countries are tearing each other apart. You play as Asu, a young lad who dreams of becoming a knight and works his way through the ranks to not only make that a reality, but also attempt to bring peace back to the world. Although it's an RPG it leans far heavier towards a visual novel (hence the 'sexy' part), as you endeavour to get to know the game's female characters better. ■

FACT

A limited edition version of Card of Destiny was also released which comes with a 17-track CD containing music from the game.

CARDCAPTOR SAKURA: TOMOYO NO VIDEO DAISAKUSEN

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega Rosso

THIS IS THE fourth video game based on the popular *Cardcaptor Sakura* manga series about a schoolgirl who accidentally frees a set of magical cards into the world and has to get them back. It's actually more like Pokémon Snap than anything else: rather than playing as Sakura, you're instead her friend Tomoyo, who regularly films Sakura's adventures. Armed with your trusty video camera, you have to film Sakura in a series of scenarios, with points earned for how well you capture the action. You can then play back your recordings and upload them online. As well as an unlockable Puyo Puyo-like puzzle game, you can also download mini-games and character-themed clocks to your VMU. ■

FACT

The game has a pretty impressive special edition which comes with a clock, a table mat, a plate, a fork and a spoon.

CASTLE FANTASIA: SEIMA TAISEN

Year	2002
Publisher	Symbio Planning
Developer	AGREE / Studio e-go

THIS VISUAL NOVEL tells the story of the Holy Demon War, which has been taking place for 200 years between two forces, Injera and Lusierra. You play as Huey, the commander of the Seventh Holy Knight Corps, who will ultimately change the course of the war. Castle Fantasia is part turn-based tactical RPG (for the battle sections), and part visual novel, because apparently Japanese Dreamcast game law dictates that you can't take part in a 200-year war without spending time to chat up some ladies too. The game was also released in a limited edition version which came in an oversized box containing a prepaid phone card and a wind-up alarm clock shaped like Studio e-go's mascot, a baby chick. ■

FACT

The game was eventually turned into a 90-minute anime, and if you think it took this opportunity to chuck in loads of nudity you would be correct.

CHAOS FIELD

Year	2004
Publisher	Milestone
Developer	Milestone

CHAOS FIELD WAS the first game released by Milestone, a studio formed by former Compile staff in an attempt to bring back the type of arcade shoot 'em up it used to be known for. For the most part it's your typical vertically scrolling schmup but its main gimmick is the titular Chaos Field, a parallel world where things are slightly more… well, chaotic, for want of a better word. At any point you can switch between the normal world and the Chaos Field, where a risk/reward system kicks in: your weapons are a lot more powerful in the Chaos Field and can sometimes destroy enemy bullets, but it's also more difficult because enemies fire more bullets in general. ■

FACT

When Puyo Puyo developer Compile closed down in 2003, its key staff formed Compile Heart while its shoot 'em up developers formed Milestone.

CHERRY BLOSSOM

Year	2004
Publisher	Takuyo
Developer	Takuyo

YET ANOTHER DREAMCAST visual novel, though this one is at least different from most on the console in that it focuses more on gay relationships. You play as Satsuki Ouse, a second year student who starts receiving messages on his mobile phone from a stranger. Could this stranger be another student in the school? And could said messages end up in a whole load of wink-wink nudge-nudgery?

Who's to say? I mean, it's a visual novel so you can probably tell, even though given its 12 rating by Japanese rating organisation CERO the content is fairly mild for a romance game. To keep things interesting, the game makes you plan a schedule which, depending on which activities you plan, affects your relationships with your fellow students. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version is considered better than the PC version because it has two extra scenarios, and epilogues for each character.

CHOCOLAT: MAID CAFE CURIO

Year	2003
Publisher	Alchemist
Developer	HuneX

THE LEAD CHARACTER in this visual novel has his world turned upside-down when his single father remarries without warning. Forced to start a new life with a stepmother and younger stepsister (careful now), things get even more stressful when the poor lad's dad tells him that he and his new bride are heading off on a three-month honeymoon, and while they're away he has to run Curio, his old man's European-themed coffee shop. Tus begins your typical boy-meets-lots-of-girls situation where you get to romance a selection of girls who frequent the coffee shop. The less said about the stepsister plot the better, mind you. As is often the case, the PC version is rated 18+ while the tamer Dreamcast version is 15+. ■

FACT

In 2004 a replica of Curio opened in Tokyo with staff outfits and decor to match those in the game. It lasted less than a year before it closed down.

CHOU HATSUMEI BOY KANIPAN: BOUSOU ROBOT NO NAZO!?

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

THIS RPG IS based on the second season of the anime series *Hatsumei Boy Kanipan* (which roughly translates to Inventor Boy Kanipan). Starting off as a C-grade inventor, you have to find the missing Dr Taishi by combining parts and materials to invent new weapons, equipment and other gizmos. A special green VMU pre-loaded with a virtual pet was released three months before the full game: if you then used it with the main game you were able to download and play new VMU mini-games on it. Ultimately, critical reception to the game was mild, with some complaining that the steps needed to invent some things were needlessly long, making it tricky for players who were new to RPGs. ■

FACT

Saban Entertainment (*Power Rangers*, *Digimon*) planned to bring the anime to the US. It was due to air on Fox Kids in September 2001 but this fell through.

CHRISTMAS SEAMAN

Year	1999
Publisher	Vivarium
Developer	Vivarium

IF YOU THOUGHT the idea of Seaman (see the western games section) was odd enough, here comes Christmas Seaman to make you think again. This 'special project' only lasted for 10 days, from December 16–26, and came with two discs: a message disc and a gift disc. The idea was that you would give the gift disc to a friend, then use the message disc to create a message for them before sending it online. The player with the gift disc would then receive the message from Seaman himself (um… 'itself') and would then have the opportunity to send one back. The box blurb adds a bit of suspense, asking if you'll receive a message back in time and experience 'the last miracle of the millennium'. ■

FACT

Christmas Seaman features music by Yasuharu Konishi, a founding member of popular Japanese pop band Pizzicato Five.

CLEOPATRA FORTUNE

Year	2001
Publisher	Altron
Developer	Taito

THIS PUZZLE GAME has an Egyptian theme and is similar to Tetris in that it's also about dropping various blocks down a large well in an attempt to make them disappear. The difference here is that this time the blocks are made up of stone, treasure, mummies and sarcophagi. If you can complete a full horizontal line of one type – all mummies, for example – then they'll disappear, Tetris style. However, you can also clear treasure and sarcophagi if you can surround them with stone blocks, essentially burying them. The Dreamcast version is based on an arcade game and improves on it with better music and more detailed graphics. It also adds a new Time Attack mode. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version of Cleopatra Fortune costs… well, a fortune. In the west, though, it was ported to the PlayStation, where it can be found dirt cheap.

CLOSE TO: INORI NO OKA

Year	2001
Publisher	Kid
Developer	Kid

THIS VISUAL NOVEL (the subtitle translates to Prayer Hill) tells the story of Motoki and Yuuna, a couple who are both struck by a car while walking down the street. When Motoki wakes up, he realises he's in a coma and is now floating around as a spirit. Motoki can get back into his body if the person who loves him most prays for him. There's just one problem with this: while Yuuna did survive the accident, she's lost her memory as a result. Motoki has to make Yuuna remember him within a few days or he'll no longer be able to return to his body and he'll die. Which is a bit heavy-going. ■

FACT

The game was later ported to PS2 where it got another final chapter called Evil Spirits, which provides a 'true' ending.

COMIC PARTY

Year	2001
Publisher	Aquaplus
Developer	Aquaplus

WHEN KAZUKI'S FRIEND Taishi drags him to the Tokyo Big Sight exhibition centre to attend the Comic Party convention, Kazuki quickly gains an appreciation for the doujinshi (self-publishing) manga artists there and decides that, given his own artistic talent, he's going to try writing his own comics. This doesn't go down well with his friend Mizuki, who thinks 'otaku' culture is for unwashed nerds and is secretly worried that she's losing her friend. The game is part dating sim, part point-and-click game as you attend monthly Comic Party events while juggling your comic writing and your interactions with a selection of girls, including Mizuki. Falling in love isn't necessary to beat the game, but each monthly comic does have to be written. ■

FACT

Comic Party is based on Comiket, a comic market held in the real-life Tokyo Big Sight twice a year.

COOL COOL TOON

Year	2000
Publisher	SNK
Developer	SNK

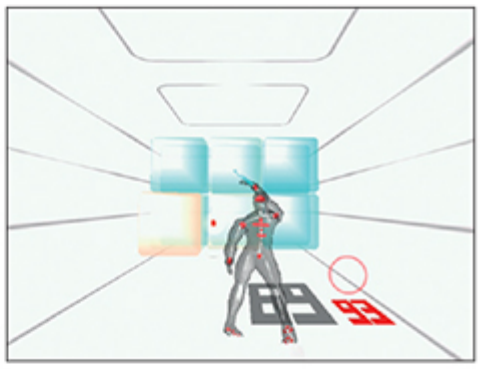
SAMBA DE AMIGO may be the most colourful rhythm action game on the Dreamcast, but Cool Cool Toon certainly runs it a close second. Described by SNK as a 'rhythm comic', the game lets you choose between two cartoon-style characters, Amp and Spica, then take part in a series of dance-offs using a special dance style called 'fritz'. As with most rhythm games the aim is to press buttons to the beat of the music, but the twist here is that the analogue stick also comes into play. Not only do you have to press the right button at the right time, you also have to be pointing the stick in the right direction when you do it. ■

FACT

The game can be connected to the Neo Geo Pocket Color title Cool Cool Jam using a link cable, to transfer character data.

COSMIC SMASH

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega Rosso



WHAT WOULD YOU get if you crossed Rez, squash and Breakout? If you answered 'Cosmic Smash' then well done, you can read a heading. The game places you in a series of rooms filled with blocks, and arms you with a racquet. The aim, as if it needed to be said, is to use the racquet to smack balls off the blocks to make them all disappear. To make matters a little less simple there's also a time limit which can be pretty strict. You can pull off special smashes to help you clear the blocks quicker, but that obviously comes with the trade-off of making the ball move faster, making for one of the most obvious risk/reward situations in video game history. Probably. ■

FACT

Cosmic Smash's unique visual style wasn't limited to the software itself. The game's packaging was an attractive transparent DVD-style box, as opposed to a typical CD case.

CR HISSATSU SHIGOTONIN PACHITTE CHONMAGE @ VPACHI

Year	2001
Publisher	Hack Berry
Developer	Hack Berry

IF YOU READ the *N64 Encyclopedia* (thanks) you'll remember there was a surprising number of pachinko games released for the console in Japan. If you thought the Dreamcast had been spared these, here comes online Dreamcast pachinko service @VPACHI and its eight pachinko games to devastate your hopes. This one's based on *Hissatsu Shigotonin*, a live-action TV drama series: the pachinko table featured exists in real life, and this is simply a Dreamcast recreation of it. As in the other @VPACHI games you'll find later in this section, players could connect online and take part in tournaments, with real-life prizes up for grabs. There's also a non-prize Ranking mode if, for you, the true thrill is the spirit of competition. ■

FACT

Hissatsu Shigotonin was only on TV between 1979 and 1981 but was hugely successful, making this pachinko machine the equivalent of a *Twin Peaks* pinball machine.

CULDCEPT II

Year 2001
Publisher Media Factory
Developer Omiya Soft

THE ORIGINAL CULDCEPT was a huge success on the Saturn in Japan, so this sequel (pronounced Culdcept Second) offered more of the same. It's basically a cross between a board game and a turn-based strategy game, in that players roll a dice and land on properties, but instead of buying them as in Monopoly you summon monsters to guard them for you, earning you magical power. Each player has a deck of cards (from a selection of more than 450) which can be used to summon creatures, cast spells and the like, so customising a deck that best suits your playing style is almost as important as the actual playing of the game. The game also supports online multiplayer with a chat room. ■

FACT

An enhanced version of Culdcept II called Culdcept Second Expansion was released on the PS2. This was then released in North America as simply Culdcept.

CYBER ANGEL MAHJONG BATTLE SHANGRI-LA

Year 1999
Publisher Marvelous Entertainment
Developer Marvelous Entertainment

ANOTHER GENRE WITH more than its fair share of representation on the N64 was mahjong games, and the Dreamcast is certainly no slouch in that field either. This one attempts to make mahjong more interesting to a certain type of player by making all your opponents attractive women, or as the back of the box puts it: 'Seven beautiful girls play a serious game of mahjong.' The aim is to take part in a mahjong tournament held at the 'Cyber Colosseum' in an electronic city called Shangri-La by defeating a series of literal AI women (in the game's lore they're programmed chips with embedded algorithms). The game features famous voice actresses, including Maaya Sakamoto (who's since voiced Aerith in Final Fantasy VII games and movies). ■

FACT

The women were designed by an artist from *Weekly Young Jump* manga magazine, which despite the name often features violent and sexual content aimed at adults.

D+VINE (LUV)

Year 2001
Publisher Princess Soft
Developer Princess Soft

ANOTHER GAME THAT was pure filth when it was originally released on PC and was then heavily edited down to something much tamer on the Dreamcast. It's an action RPG with visual novel elements in which you play as Hyde, an amateur dungeon explorer and freewheeling womaniser who wants to try and discover remnants of the 'Old World', where civilisations skilled in magic once lived before they all died out. Stopping by the town of Arvil, Hyde learns that a nearby cave is home to an ancient ruin, but when he goes exploring inside, he instead finds – you guessed it – a woman to romance and distract Hyde from all that ancient civilisation nonsense. ■

FACT

A four-part, 120-minute anime version of D+Vine (Luv) was also released in 2001, and definitely isn't for kids.

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION 2ND MIX DREAMCAST EDITION

Year 2000
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

FOR THE LONGEST time (and even still in some places) you couldn't enter an arcade without seeing at least one Dance Dance Revolution machine. This was the first DDR game released on the Dreamcast and, despite the title, actually contains a track list that combines the 1st Mix and 2nd Mix versions of the game, and even includes seven tracks from the 3rd Mix arcade machine doing the rounds at the time. In all, there are 50 tracks to boogie along to, and while most wouldn't immediately be recognisable to western players there are some exceptions such as 'Tubthumping' by Chumbawamba, 'Kung Fu Fighting' by Carl Douglas and 'That's the Way (I Like it)' by KC & The Sunshine Band. ■

FACT

Naturally, a dance mat was available for the game, and came in two varieties: a cheap soft one and a sturdier foam one which didn't move as much when you played.

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION CLUB VERSION DREAMCAST EDITION

Year	2000
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami

IN 1999, KONAMI released the catchily titled Dance Dance Revolution 2ndReMix Append Club Version Vol 1 and Vol 2 on the PlayStation. These two add-on discs were expansions for DDR 2nd Mix and added new club music to tie in with the recently released Beatmania IIDX arcade machine. A year later, the Dreamcast received its own port of the Club Version, but because of the extra storage on the GD-ROM disc both volumes were combined into a single release. Even better, this was a standalone release meaning that, unlike the PlayStation version, you didn't need 2nd Mix to play it. Tracks included featured such artists as Crunky Boy, Baby Weapon and Anal Spyder. I wish that was a joke. ■

FACT

The arcade version of DDR Club Version was supposed to link up to Beatmania IIDX, so two players could play the same song on each machine at the same time.

DANCING BLADE KATTENI MOMOTENSHI II: TEARS OF EDEN KANZENBAN

Year	1999
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami

BY THE TIME the first Dancing Blade came to the Dreamcast its sequel had already been on PlayStation for half a year. As a result of it already being out and the relative simplicity of the gameplay, it was less than a month after the first game came to Dreamcast that the second also arrived. This time there are two stories to play through: one in which a a foreign messenger from a huge floating ship appears and claims that Momohime is the princess of his country, and another in which Momohime and her friends fight against a dragon demon king who plans to take over the world. Either way, it's the same FMV choice-making gameplay. ■

FACT

The first game was ported to PSP, but as a video (with chapter-selecting elements) rather than a game, just to make it even clearer that the gameplay was limited.

DANCING BLADE KATTENI MOMOTENSHI! KANZENBAN

Year	1999
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami

IF YOU OWN the *Mega Drive & Genesis Encyclopedia* you'll have seen the sheer number of full-motion video (FMV) games released on the Mega CD. By the time the Dreamcast was out that fad had more or less died out, but Dancing Blade showed that it wasn't completely gone yet. It's less of a game and more an anime version of a Choose Your Own Adventure book, as the player follows a girl called Momohime, who was born from a peach, who's headed off on a journey to find out the secret of her birth. As the episode plays you get to choose what happens next at various stages, essentially resulting in a branching 30-minute episode. ■

FACT

There are four different endings in the game, depending on which choices you make along the way.

DEATH CRIMSON 2: MERANITO NO SAIDAN

Year	1999
Publisher	Ecole
Developer	Ecole

THE FIRST DEATH Crimson was released on the Saturn, and we've already seen the third game in the western section of this book, but what about the second? Death Crimson 2 was only released in Japan and is more of the same arcade-style light gun gameplay, with a plot set 20 years after that of the original game. While the first Death Crimson was widely criticised for being what's known as a 'kusoge' (a 'shit game'), it appears that the sequel is more of a 'bakage' (a 'stupid game'), as in one that's deliberately silly rather than just incompetent. The game has many daft references to its predecessor, and generally feels more tongue-in-cheek. This didn't stop it from reviewing and selling badly again, though. ■

FACT

In a New Year's address written after the game's release, developer Ecole described it as 'a revenge, a comeback and a death'.

DEJIKO NO MAIBURA

Year	2000
Publisher	Isao
Developer	Isao

THIS IS A sort of fan disc based on the Dream Passport 3 internet software, but branded with characters from manga and anime series Di Gi Charat. Much like the vanilla version of Dream Passport 3 it includes an internet browser, but this time the icons, console, screensaver and the like feature images and voices from Di GI Charat. Perhaps most interestingly, the disc also claims to feature the first 'browser-linked' character chat feature. The game lets you chat with characters from the series like many visual novels would, but the twist is that it will access your internet and email use to try and determine what things you like, and use this information to decide which topics to discuss with you. That definitely couldn't backfire. ■

FACT

The game's box claims that by having the series' main character Dejiko talk to you, it makes browsing the web 'much more comfortable'. Depends what you're searching for, I suppose.

DENPA SHONENTEKI KENSHOSEIKATSU SOFT NASUBI NO HEYA

Year	1999
Publisher	Hudson Soft
Developer	Hudson Soft

THIS WAS BASED on a real Japanese TV show that I swear to you actually happened because I remember watching clips from it back in the day. It involved a struggling stand-up comedian called Nasubi who took on a mystery job which involved locking himself in a room for however long it took to win a million yen's worth of prizes by writing into magazine competitions. Any food or clothes he wanted also had to be won. He ended up in that room for 15 months, completely unaware he was on TV. The game itself is a virtual pet game of sorts in which you take care of Nasubi, but it also has some genuine contests you can enter online to win real-life prizes. ■

FACT

When Nasubi reached the million yen target, he was quickly sent to South Korea where he was placed in another room and had to do it all over again in a foreign country.

DENSHA DE GO! 2: KOUSOKU-HEN 3000 BANDAI

Year	2000
Publisher	Taito
Developer	Taito

JAPAN LOVES ITS trains, and the Densha de Go! series doesn't mess around when it comes to letting players experience what it's like to drive one. The second game in the series features seven main lines: the Hokuhoku Line, Akita Shinkansen Line, Ouu Main Line, Tazawako Line, Keihin-Touhoku Line, Yamanote Line and the Toukaidou Main Line. This Dreamcast version was released to celebrate 3000 active Densha de Go! 2 arcade machines in Japan, and is essentially a sort of special edition which adds new routes, extends some of the existing ones and chucks in some new trains for good measure. Fans of the series enjoyed this one too because it wasn't too much of a 'departure' (I'm so sorry). ■

FACT

Taito released a Dreamcast Densha de Go! Controller, which looked like a real set of train controls and was unsurprisingly only compatible with this game.

DERBY TSUKU: DERBY BA O TSUKUROU!

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

ROUGHLY TRANSLATED AS Let's Make a Derby Horse, this is actually the third instalment in Sega's Tsukurou (Let's Make) series. As the title suggests, the game is a racehorse management simulation, in which you run a stable and train your horses to make them good enough to compete in races and maybe, just maybe, win the game's ultimate prize, the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe. The game featured full integration with the actual 2000 horse racing programme and players could see their horse up against digital recreations of racehorses that actually existed at the time. You can also take your horse online to compete against other players' horses, which feels like a slightly safer alternative to the real thing. ■

FACT

Sega would eventually release five Derby Tsuku games, three of which were exclusive to the PS2 after it left the console business.

DERBY TSUKU 2

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Smilebit

IF THERE'S ONE thing you can say about horse racing fans it's that they're a passionate bunch, so it should be no surprise that Derby Tsuku wouldn't remain a standalone game furlong (ahem). Derby Tsuku 2 didn't change any of the basics – it's not like the horses suddenly had mounted machine guns or anything – but the game did include some quality of life updates to make the general experience a bit smoother. Players could now skip races they weren't interested in watching, and could even skip whole months if their life was carefree enough. The number of local and international racers was greatly increased and the difficulty was lowered, but arguably the most interesting new feature was the ability to now train jockeys. ■

FACT

Joining the real-name horses from the first game are 40 real-life jockeys, including local heroes and female jockeys.

DESPIRIA

Year	2000
Publisher	Atlus
Developer	Atlus

IT'S HARD TO properly explain deSPIRIA in words, but let's give it a go. It's a first-person exploration game with still screens (similar to games like Myst) and RPG style turn-based battles. Set in the year 2070, the game puts you in the role of Allure Valentine, an undercover agent for Church, a new organisation that's taken control of Japan in the 20 years following the Psalm War (which wiped out two-thirds of the world's population). The game opens with Allure being in a train crash and trying to not only escape, but figure out who caused it. During battle scenes you can use 'Minds', which are mental attacks with names like Grudge, Love and Death, which are designed to harm enemies by attacking their own minds. ■

FACT

deSPIRIA was released before CERO ratings were used in Japan, but the box does still warn of 'violence, bloodshed and horror'.

DI GI CHARAT FANTASY

Year	2001
Publisher	Broccoli
Developer	Westone

THIS VISUAL NOVEL is based on *Di Gi Charat*, a manga and anime series about a cat-girl called Dejiko who also serves as the mascot of a Japanese retail chain called Gamers. The game puts players in the shoes of a lad who gets sucked through a vortex and ends up in a fantasy world along with Dejiko and her friends Puchiko and Rabi-en-Rose. The thing is, the chap has something of a crush on Dejiko, and not only finds himself alone in the woods with her, but also quickly realises that she lost her memory while passing through the vortex. The aim of the game (which, incidentally, is very innocent and rated for all ages) is to find a way back home. ■

FACT

The character of Dejiko is usually quite aggressive and competitive. The game showed fans a new side of her, since the memory loss makes her extremely shy and quiet.

DIGITAL KEIBA SHINBUN MY TRACKMAN

Year	1999
Publisher	Shouei
Developer	Shouei

IT MAY SOUND like the sort of thing Sony would call a media player, but My Trackman is actually an application designed for those who like betting on horse races. Every Friday players could use it to connect online and download the latest horse racing information provided by the six newspapers of the Kanto Horse Racing Newspaper Association (that's right, those guys). It also had a simulation mode where you could select certain horses, tweak things like track condition, then see who would theoretically win to help you with your betting decisions. While all this required an internet connection, there was also an offline database of racehorse and jockey performance history, allowing you to do more research without racking up a phone bill. ■

FACT

A sequel called Digital Keiba Shinbun 2 was listed in one of Sega's 'Dream Lineup' promotional booklets, but was never released.

DOGUU SENKI: HAOU

Year 2000
Publisher Victor Interactive
Developer Victor Interactive

THIS IS A hex-based strategy game with a fantasy setting. It tells the story of a war between science and nature, with the science-flavouring Nibiru and its insectoid weapon Metal Crust attacking the nature-worshipping Mu Kingdom and its elemental protector, Dogu. Each of the game's 50 stages offers your typical turn-based tactical fare, with a few tweaks designed to keep things interesting. Given the nature-themed plot, the attacks are based on six elements: light, dark, wind, fire, earth and water. Nature can also affect the battlefield directly, impacting on these moves: if it rains, for example, units who rely on their water attributes will become stronger. You can also destroy parts of the landscape to block your enemy's routes.

FACT

The characters were designed by Haruhiko Mikimoto, who designed the characters in the likes of Macross 7 and Gunbuster, and did key animation on the '80s *Astro Boy* anime.

DORICATCH SERIES

Year 1999-2000
Publisher Sega
Developer CRI / Toyota

THESE FAIRLY RARE discs were used at Toyota showrooms across Japan and were never designed to be sold to the public, but as is the way of the world some of them managed to escape to freedom. Essentially, each of the nine discs that were released focus on a specific Toyota model: the Gaia, Hilux Surf, Celica, FunCargo, Estima, Ceksior, Land Cruiser Prado, RAV4 L, and a disc containing both the Land Cruiser 100 and the Cygnus. The idea was that the game would be running on the showroom floor and customers would be able to use it to see a high-res polygonal model of the car driving, then add customisation options to see how it would look should they wish to buy the real thing. ■

FACT

Toyota would return to video games in 2017 with a series of crossover animations showing Street Fighter II characters interacting with a Toyota CH-R and trying not to break it.

DOKI DOKI IDOL STAR SEEKER REMIX

Year 2002
Publisher G.rev
Developer G.rev

YOU'RE PROBABLY AWARE of Minesweeper, the puzzle game best known among '90s era Windows users as the free game that wasn't Solitaire. Doki Doki Idol Star Seeker, which was originally released in arcades in Japan in 2001, is basically the opposite of Minesweeper. Instead of trying to clear a grid while avoiding bombs, this time you're actively trying to find them (though in this game they're stars instead of bombs). There are also some other differences which make this game a bit easier than Minesweeper. The grid is made of hexagons instead of squares, meaning the maximum number of potential surrounding stars is six, instead of Minesweeper's eight. Oh, and there are girls in various states of undress, because of course there are. ■

FACT

The 'Remix' in the title is because the Dreamcast version adds new characters, a Story mode for each one and more stages.

DOUSOUKAI 2: AGAIN & REFRAIN

Year 2002
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Fairy Tale

DON'T WORRY, THIS isn't another visual novel. It's actually another two visual novels. This bundle combines Dousoukai Again and Dousoukai Refrain, two sequels to the original Dousoukai (which translates to 'Class Reunion'). Dousoukai Again takes place at New Year's Eve, where Mizuho plans to finally get with her childhood love Tatsuya, but discovers her mother is ill and has to choose between taking care of her or taking care of business (if you catch my drift). Dousoukai Refrain takes place on the same night and focuses more on old flames reigniting when the clock strikes midnight. Both games take place between December 31 and January 14, and feature simple choice-based gameplay typical of basic visual novels. ■

FACT

Although Again and Refrain were two separate releases on PC, this Dreamcast version starts as a single game with one of the early choices splitting the story either way.

DREAMFLYER

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Colabo / Gao / Sega

IF YOU'RE A big fan of collecting things that are absolutely useless nowadays, then DreamFlyer is the game for you. While it was always possible to send email to other people using the Dreamcast and its web browser, DreamFlyer lets you send more visually appealing emails to other players, as long as you both have the disc. Rather than just standard emails you can send photographic postcards and letters with character art on them. There are also around 1,000 stamps which can be applied to your email, some of which are animated. You can also use a music editing tool to make your own melodies and attach those to the email too. Of course, now that Sega's servers are down, the disc is entirely unusable. ■

FACT

DreamFlyer cost ¥2,800 (around $20), and both you and your friend needed to own a copy, so that's around 40 bucks to send fancy emails.

DREAMSTUDIO

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Nextech

A FAIRLY AMBITIOUS piece of software, Dreamstudio is one of the first 3D game-making tools available on console. Actually, to be a bit more accurate, it specifically lets you create your own 3D adventure games, because that's the core engine you build upon, and it doesn't allow for RPG elements like character stats or equipment. At its most basic, you have to place objects and other elements on a pre-prepared field, then you set game events and link them together to create set-pieces. Dreamstudio also had a (now inactive) built-in internet browser which let you upload your own creations and download those of other users, but don't start planning your Zelda sequel yet: you're usually limited by the 128 KB storage size of the VMU. ■

FACT

Dreamstudio had a solid following of enthusiasts, who became known as 'Dorisuta' (dori = 'dorimu', aka 'dream', and sta = 'sutajio', aka 'studio').

EISEI MEIJIN III: GAME CREATOR YOSHIMURA NOBUHIRO NO ZUNOU

Year 1999
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

THIS IS THE third in a series of shogi (Japanese chess) games, the first two of which were released on the Saturn. This third version lets you freely edit the board so you can set up specific scenarios, and also has advanced opponent AI which not only thinks six times faster than in the previous game, but can now also think ahead to determine potential moves depending on what you do next. If you fancy yourself as a bit of a shogi master (and who doesn't, let's face it) there's also a blindfold mode, where some of the pieces or their markings can be hidden, meaning you not only have to figure out which move to make, you also have to remember where everything is. ■

FACT

The game includes classic shogi scenarios from the Edo period, so you can finally recreate those 1600s Soukei–Souko grudge matches you've always read about.

EL DORADO GATE VOL 1–7

Year 2000/01
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

AS AN INTERESTING experiment, Capcom decided to release a Dreamcast RPG game split into smaller chunks, almost like you'd get in episodic games these days. El Dorado Gate was released as seven separate volumes, each containing a few chapters, with 18 in total. Across these chapters you're introduced to 12 different protagonists, each with their own story, as their paths all eventually cross before they take on the main enemy, Dios. Each episode took around 2–3 hours to complete and Capcom released a new volume every two months, meaning by the end of 14 months players had a full 54-hour RPG epic. Sadly, at the time of writing Capcom has never given its epic an official English translation. ■

FACT

If you bought Volume 7 from Sega's own D-Direct online store, it came with a box to store all seven volumes in, along with an art book.

ELYSION: EION NO SANCTUARY

Year 2002
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Terios

ELYSION IS SET on a small island in the Adriatic Sea called Santa Maria, where an elderly chap by the name of Theo Padrino lives in a huge mansion. You play as Ryoichi Katsuragi, a physician who is one day summoned by Padrino to live in the mansion as his personal doctor, and to manage the five (conveniently young and attractive) maids he has working for him. You guessed it, it's a sexy visual novel: all that stuff about the old guy was just an excuse for you to wink at a bunch of ladies in maid outfits. In fairness, there is a little more to this one, because Padrino's hiding some secrets of his own, making the game a mystery story too. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version may be less explicit than the 2000 PC one, but it does add an extra character called Charlotte and a new scenario.

ERDE: NEZU NO KI NO SHITA DE

Year 2003
Publisher Kid
Developer Kid

ROUGHLY TRANSLATED AS Erde: Under the Juniper Tree, this visual novel opens with a girl called Yoko crashing her motorbike into the house of a lad called Takumi. Yoko offers to stay at Takumi's home while she rests and repairs her bike (talk about imposing), and will make him meals in return. Cue your typical visual novel romance gubbins, but with a twist this time: the villagers in Takumi's town can also access a sort of virtual world called Town, a metaverse of sorts where they can meet other people from all over the world. This at least adds an interesting sci-fi gimmick to what would otherwise be a run-of-the-mill chat 'em up. ■

FACT

Erde is one of the few Kid-developed visual novels from its era that wasn't re-released in a budget version and didn't get its own art book.

ES

Year 2001
Publisher TV Asahi
Developer Four-Some

SEEMINGLY TRYING TO win the prize for shortest title ever (watch your back, D2), Es is a live-action interactive movie starring a variety of well-known Japanese actors and celebrities. The game follows Inspector Kusakabe (Hiroshi Mikami, who had previously starred in a movie version of Parasite Eve), as he attempts to find Yumi Tachibana, a missing person who's believed to be the potential seventh victim of a serial killer. The player dives into Kusakabe's memories, searching for things to trigger recollections which can then be pulled together to try and figure out where to go next. The three-disc game is mainly played by navigating through a series of still images, similar to games like Myst, interspersed with FMV scenes. ■

FACT

One of the game's leads, Yumiko Shaku, played the lead role in *Godzilla Against Mechagodzilla*, so fair play to her. Well, the lead human role, obviously.

EVE ZERO: ARK OF THE MATTER

Year 2001
Publisher NetVillage
Developer C's Ware

EVE ZERO IS a prequel to Eve Burst Error, a visual novel released on the PC and Saturn (among others). Zero was originally released on the PlayStation, and this Dreamcast version is an enhanced port. The player takes on two roles at the same time: womanising detective Kojiro Amagi and attractive secret agent Marina Hojo (I smell chemistry!). The two are on separate missions at first – Kojiro is investigating the disappearance of a genetic researcher's son, while Marina is looking into a series of bizarre murders – but eventually their two stories merge and hijinks ensue. The game forces the player to switch between stories regularly: for example, sometimes one character needs to open a door in their story for the other to proceed. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version isn't just an enhanced port, it also comes bundled with an encyclopedia covering the Eve universe.

EVER 17: THE OUT OF INFINITY

Year	2002
Publisher	Kid
Developer	Kid

EVER 17 IS the second game in developer Kid's Infinity series, the first of which was Never 7 (which is found later in this book). Like its predecessor it's a visual novel, but it's not a direct sequel and is its own standalone story, with the main link being that both games have sci-fi themes. Ever 17 tells the story of seven people who find themselves trapped in an underwater theme park called LeMU. The water pressure is building, meaning the group have an oddly specific 119 hours to not only escape before the park is flooded, but to also find out how the accident happened. There's romance in here, but not as much as in the first game. ■

FACT

The series ended with Remember 11: The Age of Infinity on PS2, which continued the shift away from romance and was almost entirely focused on sci-fi.

EXODUS GUILTY NEOS

Year	2001
Publisher	Abel
Developer	Abel

THIS VISUAL NOVEL was originally released on the PlayStation in 1998 as Exodus Guilty: the 'Neos' version adds voice acting. Its unique hook is that it has three parallel stories, each running in a completely different period of time: 1200 BC (where a swordsman called Ares is travelling to the Holy Land to question the will of God), the modern day (where an amateur treasure hunter called Kasumi is looking for Moses' lost 11th Commandment) and 1300 AD (where a florist's daughter called Sue discovers she's the world's last princess). All three stories run at the same time with the player using a gimmick called the 'Multi Time-Zapping System' to view each area from the perspective of each protagonist in their own era. ■

FACT

In a rare reversal for visual novels, this arrived on console first and then came to PC (in a more explicit form, obviously) a few years later, rather than the other way around.

EXTRA CAWAII!

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

IF YOU'RE SOLELY interested in collecting Dreamcast games then you won't want to bother with Extra Cawaii! but it's an interesting curio nonetheless. This disc was given away with the August 2000 issue of *Cawaii!* magazine and, like the mag, focused on the 'gyaru' fashion subculture (which often, but not always, means heavy fake tan, long fake nails and dramatic makeup). It's basically an interactive version of the magazine, with features like a multiple-choice adventure game (where you help a girl called Reiko make the right choices on a date), a makeover video, a quiz to tell whether your boyfriend is cheating on you and video interviews with some of the magazine models. ■

FACT

Sega and Cawaii also set up the Dreamcast Idol Club, where readers could apply to be models and exchange DIC messages (stop sniggering) with other members.

FIRST KISS MONOGATARI 2

Year	2002
Publisher	Broccoli
Developer	Broccoli

ALSO KNOWN AS First Kiss Story II, this sequel takes place four years after the events of the first game and is a fairly straightforward romance-based visual novel in which a university student called Kaito Hongouji runs away from his dad, who's demanding that he join the family business. Heading back to Amagi, the city where he grew up, Kaito reunites with girls from his childhood and meets a few new ladies too, with the game's obvious goal then being to get all romantic and such (though it's all squeaky clean stuff). A special edition of the Dreamcast version came bundled with a port of the original First Kiss Monogatari: since it's essentially a bonus feature it isn't in this book as a separate entry. ■

FACT

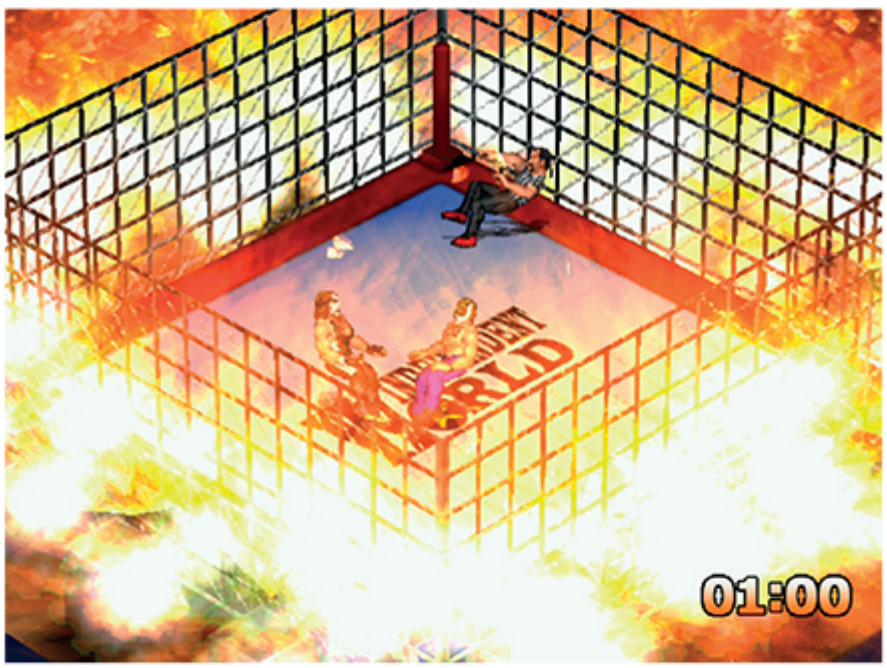
Amagi was a real-life city in the Fukuoka PReflecture, but no longer exists. In 2006, it merged with the towns of Asakura and Haki to form a new city called Asakura.

FIRE PRO WRESTLING D

Year	2001
Publisher	Spike
Developer	S-Neo

THE FIRE PRO Wrestling series was long considered the definitive choice for serious devotees of professional wrestling. While the WWF games of the early '90s obviously appealed to fans of that particular organisation, it wasn't until the polygonal era of AKI and Yuke's that the gameplay matched the glamour. Instead, for those who loved the technicality of wrestling, the Fire Pro Games were the real deal, offering a unique timing-based grapple system that led to more realistic back-and-forth bouts. Fire Pro Wrestling D was the 18th Fire Pro game, and the third on a Sega console (following two Saturn releases).

Although the industry was jumping to polygons, Fire Pro remained resolutely sprite-based, and as such that's the case here. The number of match types in Fire Pro Wrestling D was massive for the time, with the typical options – singles, tag, battle royale and the like – joined by exploding cage deathmatches, barbed wire deathmatches, fluorescent light boards deathmatches and 'gruesome fighting' (MMA-style octagon fights). There are also 220 fighters from around the world (with 44 additional downloadable ones), but even though this includes western wrestlers their names have been changed for licensing reasons: 'Steel Gold' Steam Odin instead of 'Stone Cold' Steve Austin, Trouble J instead of Triple H, Korea instead of Chyna, that sort of thing. Luckily, the extensive Edit mode not only lets you create your own wrestlers, but also rename everyone else in the game, meaning with a bit of time you can have the ultimate wrestling dream match generator. ■



FACT

Speaking of fake names in the game, Ric Flair is known as Dick Slender here. That's probably one of the first ones you're going to want to change.

FOR SYMPHONY: WITH ALL ONE'S HEART

Year	2003
Publisher	Takuyo
Developer	Takuyo

ON PAPER, IT'S fair to say that For Symphony is a straightforward romantic visual novel, with a familiar setting (a high school). Indeed, the premise – that you play as a student in your last year of high school and get to hang out with your classmates in various scenarios like a trip to the beach – isn't remarkably unique. What does set the game apart from most visual novels, however, is that you get to choose your character's sex at the start of the game, but don't start getting any LGBTQ+ vibes from this one: depending on whether you choose to play as a boy or a girl, you can either try to get romantically involved with certain characters or try to make them your best friend. ■

FACT

A PSP port of the game was released in 2007 containing more voice acting, two new characters, updated art, a music player and a gallery mode.

FRAGRANCE TALE

Year	2001
Publisher	Takuyo
Developer	Takuyo

IN A MYSTERIOUS world created by Gaia, there sits three worlds sitting side-by-side. One one side is the 'Sphere of Light', where angels live, and on the other is the 'Sphere of Shadow', where demons dwell. Right in the middle is Rildana, an Earth-like planet which is home to Liam, who one day finds a small bottle containing 'Glaumery', a magic potion that can be mixed with other things to create perfumes. It's up to Liam to find the right fragrance that will help him mix a perfume with enough power to bring peace to both the angels and demons. Naturally, this being a yaoi ('boy love') visual novel, albeit a non-explicit one, Liam also has to resist getting flirty with them too. ■

FACT

Developer Takuyo was also working on another Dreamcast game called Ring Age (stop laughing, it was an RPG) but it wasn't released.

FRAME GRIDE

Year 1999
Publisher FromSoftware
Developer FromSoftware

LONG BEFORE DARK Souls and Elden Ring were a twinkle in developer FromSoftware's eye, the studio was best known for its Armored Core mech games on PlayStation and its King's Field mediaeval RPGs. Although Armored Core was never ported to the Dreamcast, it did get Frame Gride, a mech-based alternative for those seeking robo-hijinks on Sega's console. What's more, it also scratched that King's Field itch to an extent, since Frame Gride is set in a mediaeval style fantasy world, albeit one with mechs in it. It's essentially a free-roaming fighting game in the style of Sega's Virtual On series, but focusing more on close combat with swords and the like. There was also online multiplayer if you wanted to take on mechs around Japan. ■

FACT

US video game trade publication *GameWeek* listed Frame Gride for an American release in Q4 1999, then Q1 2000, but it was never to be.

FUSHIGI NO DUNGEON: FURAI NO SHIREN GAIDEN: ONNA KENSHI ASUKA KENZAN!

Year 2002
Publisher Sega
Developer Neverland

THE MYSTERY DUNGEON series has enjoyed a lengthy run ever since it started in 1993, with a bunch of different licensed versions taking in the likes of Pokémon and Final Fantasy. In the series' early days it was mostly focused on an original story, Shiren the Wanderer, and this Dreamcast entry (the 11th Mystery Dungeon) is a spin-off of that. You play as Asuka, a character from N64 game Shiren the Wanderer 2, and there are two separate stories to play through: one where she helps a small village with a nearby ninja army, and one where she has to recover stolen festival equipment from a monster. Gameplay, like the rest of the series, is your typical rogue-like dungeon explorer. ■

FACT

The first Mystery Dungeon game was a Super Famicom title starring the merchant from Dragon Quest IV, as he searched dungeons for items to sell.

GAIA MASTER KESSEN!: SEIKIOH DENSETSU

Year 2001
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

ORIGINALLY RELEASED ON the PlayStation before being ported to the Dreamcast, this is a board game starring a series of colourful characters: and when I say a board game, I basically mean Monopoly. Every 100 years, a divine gnome (seriously) called Gaia Master descends on his floating kingdom, covering the sun, moon and stars. To Gaia Master, the world beneath him is a mere board game, and its people are playing pieces, so naturally you get to play as one of them. The majority of the game really is a Monopoly knock-off, what with the buying of property and charging players rent if they land on it. The only difference is the occasional 'combat', which consists of card battling. ■

FACT

One of the characters, Princess Tiara, was originally planned to star in Capcom's Wii fighting game Tatsunoko vs Capcom but was cut due to development time.

GAKKYUU-OU YAMAZAKI: YAMAZAKI OUKOKU DAI FUN SO!

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

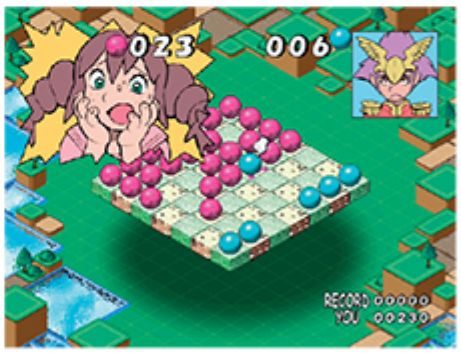
THIS IS A party game for up to four players based on *Gakkyuu-Ou Yamazaki*, a 'gag manga' and anime series with an unhealthy obsession with poo. The manga and show tell the story of Yamazaki, a comically mean schoolboy who's trying his best to become the 'gakkyuu-ou' (class king) and gets into all sorts of scraps with his teachers, classmates and family as a result. The game has a board game theme, where the aim is to increase your territory by clearing events (such as mini-games) which appear when you land on squares, and also by collecting 'crown coins' for meeting certain conditions. Naturally, the game's cast of playable characters comes directly from the manga and anime. ■

FACT

Seven months before this game came out, the first Gakkyuu-Ou Yamazaki title was released on the Game Boy. This was more of an RPG-type adventure.

GET!! COLONIES

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega



THIS PUZZLE GAME sees representatives from different tribes competing to become the ruler of the world. It's quite a dramatic premise for what's really just a basic competitive puzzler, in which players place coloured balls on a grid. You can either create a new ball by making a copy right next to an existing one, or make an existing one move by jumping it a few spaces. If you clone or jump a ball next to an opponent's ball, you'll turn it into your own colour. The aim, then, is to end up with more balls of your colour than your opponent's. There's a Story mode where you take on a series of CPU foes, or if you prefer carnage there's a four-player mode. ■

FACT

The tribal representatives include an Amazon, a birdman, a fairy, a robot, a demon, a maid and a human. Even though a maid's technically a human too.

GIANT GRAM: ALL-JAPAN PRO WRESTLING 2 IN NIPPON BUDOUKAN

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Scarab

THIS PRO WRESTLING title was the second game in the Giant Gram series (the first was on Saturn) and features 12 stars from All-Japan Pro Wrestling, including the likes of Vader and Giant Baba. Interestingly, like its Saturn predecessor, it also includes some Virtua Fighter characters as playable wrestlers, along with a few other hidden original characters to bring the roster up to 19. As in real Japanese pro wrestling, gameplay is quite technical, with a greater focus on strategy: some wrestlers have specific weak body parts, for example. It also has two VMU mini-games, one of which is a fake TV channel which occasionally beeps, at which point you press a button to unlock something in the main game. ■

FACT

This was the first NAOMI arcade game to support the Dreamcast VMU, meaning players could use the same save data at home and in the arcade.

GIANT GRAM 2000: ALL-JAPAN PRO WRESTLING 3

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	WOW Entertainment

THE THIRD AND final Giant Gram game is generally considered to be the best, and is certainly the most feature-packed. The roster has been greatly expanded to 45, with new additions including the likes of Dr Death Steve Williams, Bruno Sammartino and Bruiser Brody. This also includes a healthy selection of secret wrestlers, some of whom don't have their real names but are clearly supposed to be the likes of the Great Muta, Tiger Mask and Antonio Inoki. As well as an Arcade mode where you take on eight matches in a row, there's also a History mode where you get to play 12 of the greatest AJPW matches ever, and have to accurately recreate them by performing certain moves within a limited timeframe. ■

FACT

Bruiser Brody was much-loved in Japan and was given a posthumous lifetime achievement award by *Tokyo Sports* newspaper after he was murdered backstage at an event in Puerto Rico.

GODZILLA GENERATIONS

Year	1998
Publisher	Sega
Developer	General Entertainment

AS ONE OF the four launch games accompanying the Dreamcast in Japan, Godzilla Generations would have been many Japanese players' first taste of Sega's new console. In it, players can choose between Godzilla and Mechagodzilla – you can unlock other variations, like the original 1954 Godzilla and the 1998 US version – and are given a simple task: destroy each of the five cities in the game before your time limit runs out. Each character has the ability to fire projectiles, and can also attempt to block any attacks from the humans trying to stop you. The controls are a bit on the clunky side, which is perhaps why the game also gives you the ability to heal yourself, perhaps to lessen frustration. ■

FACT

One of the unlockable 'monsters' is a giant version of Dr Serizawa, the scientist from the first Godzilla movie, armed with his Oxygen Destroyer weapon and a head-mounted laser.

GODZILLA GENERATIONS: MAXIMUM IMPACT

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Quintet

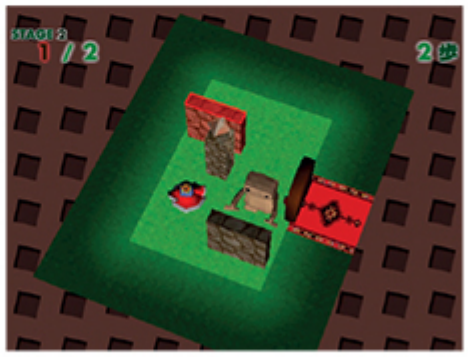
CRITICAL RECEPTION TO Godzilla Generations was fairly tepid, so Sega and Quintet decided to try again a year later with a sequel. Rather than sticking with the same formula and hoping it would work out this time, the developer decided to completely revamp the gameplay, switching to an on-rails system that almost makes the game look like a stompy, land-based version of Panzer Dragoon (though obviously not as memorable). This time there's only one Godzilla to control as he ploughs his way through various Japanese cities before engaging in boss fights with the likes of Biollante, King Ghidorah, Mothra and Super X3, in an attempt to reach the final battle against Destoroyah. ■

FACT

In a nice nod to the fans, the bosses in Maximum Impact appear in the same order in which they first made their movie debuts.

GOLEM NO MAIGO

Year	2000
Publisher	Caramel Pot
Developer	Caramel Pot



THIS CHARMING LITTLE puzzle game has you playing as a stone golem whose job is to guide a king to the end of 100 levels by making a path for him. In the style of Lemmings (or ChuChu Rocket, if you want to stick with the Dreamcast theme), the king will continue to stumble along in a straight line until he hits a wall, at which point he'll turn around and keep walking. The Golem has the ability to push these walls, so the aim is to move them around in such a way that the King will eventually end up at the exit. That's only half the job, though: you also need to connect the stage's walls together before the level is considered cleared. ■

FACT

The game's director Shuichi Ishikawa also described himself as the 'scenario writer, programmer, stage designer, publicity writer, sales rep, chef, office cleaner and so on'.

GOLF SHIYOUYO: COURSES DATA – ADVENTURE EDITION

Year	2000
Publisher	SoftMax
Developer	SoftMax

GOLF SHIYOUYO IS the Japanese title of Tee Off, found in the western section of this book. When publisher Bottom Up went bankrupt, the rights to the game were moved over to Softmax, which then released this expansion disc (though it can be played on its own). The main event here is the addition of five new courses – Fiji, Nepal, Egypt, Mexico and Canada – for a total of 90 holes, most of which are more difficult than those found in the base game. It also includes a Free Round mode, where players can choose to play a points-based tournament, stroke play or match play. Although the main Golf Shiyouyo disc isn't needed, by using it you can carry over its characters. ■

FACT

Softmax also re-released the original Golf Shiyouyo and sold it as a 'Kouryaku Pack'. Don't be confused: the packaging is different and it contains a strategy guide, but the disc is identical.

GOLF SHIYOUYO 2: ARATANARU CHOUSEN

Year	2001
Publisher	SoftMax
Developer	SoftMax

SOFTMAX MAY HAVE inherited Golf Shiyouyo as a result of Bottom Up going belly-up, but this sequel was entirely its own. This time there are seven courses to choose from: Japan, Hawaii, Sweden, Brazil, Zimbabwe, England and America. The sequel also added online multiplayer (which naturally is no longer available), and included the ability to customise your golfer with equipment from Japanese golf brand Bridgestone Golf. Players can now choose between 23 different characters, each from a different country, and can take part in new modes like Time Attack. New items are bought with Golf Points: these can be earned by playing golf, or by trying out the game's slot machines and blackjack table. ■

FACT

One more Golf Shiyouyo game was released after this, for the Game Boy Advance. Oddly, it had a tie-in with Tomy board game character Pop-up Pirate.

GRAUEN NO TORIKAGO KAPITEL 1–6

Year 1999-2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THIS INTERESTING PROJECT consisted of six separate volumes sold exclusively through the Dreamcast Direct online store. It's not actually a game at all, but rather a six-hour horror movie split into 365 separate one-minute episodes. The idea was that you would connect your Dreamcast online each day and download a new save file to your VMU which would unlock the next clip, then every two months you'd buy the next volume with the next batch of episodes on it. The story itself is about a 16-year-old student called Nao who moves out of her parents' home and into an apartment. When Nao discovers the headless corpse of one of her neighbours, that's when it all kicks off. ■

FACT

The full movie was eventually released on VHS: given each Dreamcast volume now sells for hundreds of dollars despite being unplayable today, it's probably just as well.

GUILTY GEAR X

Year 2000
Publisher Sammy
Developer Arc System Works

DON'T WORRY, YOU didn't miss out on nine other Guilty Gear games before this one. Guilty Gear X is only the second entry in Arc System Works' one-on-one fighting series, released a couple of years after the first game impressed PlayStation owners. Like its predecessor, it's a weapons-based fighter with four attack buttons – punch, kick, weak slash and heavy slash – but the 'instant kill' special move in the first game was toned down for the sequel after complaints that it was a little game-breaking. As with the rest of the series, Guilty Gear X is particularly notable for its impressive visuals, and its 16 playable fighters are all hand-drawn with impressive detail. ■

FACT

According to review aggregator site GameRankings, the Dreamcast version of Guilty Gear X is the highest rated game in the entire series to date.

GUNDAM BATTLE ONLINE

Year 2001
Publisher Bandai
Developer BEC, Highwaystar

THIS IS A turn-based strategy game set in the world of the *Mobile Suit Gundam* series. As a commander of an independent fleet, you're in charge of up to three battleships and nine mobile suits. You can choose to be on the side of the Earth Federation (the good guys) or the Principality of Zeon (the bad guys), with each side getting its own single-player storyline. As the title suggests, though, the game's main selling point was its online gameplay, with up to four players able to take part in network battles. The game would also download aircraft, weapons and characters from the anime for use in the online mode, though this is all fairly redundant at this point because the servers were shut down nine months after release. ■

FACT

The player characters for each storyline, Will Fred and Wolf Ransom, were original to this game. However, they each later appeared in the 2004 manga *Gundam Legacy*.

GURUGURU ONSEN 2

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Overworks

CAST YOUR MIND back to the start of this section, where Atusmare! Guruguru Onsen can be found. It was clear that this 1999 hot spring-themed casual game collection had gathered something of a following, because this sequel followed a couple of years later. Guruguru Onsen 2 retains the same setting as its predecessor but introduces a new selection of games. Mahjong returns for a second outing, but this time joining it are Uno, Poker and an original game called Hot Spring Investigation Department. Similar to the board game Scotland Yard, one player is chosen to be an escaped criminal hiding at the hot spring, and the players have to figure out who it is. ■

FACT

The game was supposed to offer cross-platform play with PC and PS2 owners, but the planned PS2 port was never released.

GURUGURU ONSEN 3

Year	2002
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Overworks

THE THIRD AND final Guruguru Onsen game on the Dreamcast brought back some of the fan favourites from the first game along with a couple of new ones to keep things fresh to at least some degree. Returning for another shot at casual online multiplayer glory were Mahjong (the only game to appear in all three entries), Daifugou (aka Tycoon) and Napoleon, while joining these were Reversi and Hanafuda.

The game's chat room mode was expanded with more features and more regular 'event chats', where players would be able to discuss certain topics. Like the second game, it was also compatible with Sega's 'Open Dice' game service, which was designed for cross-platform play. Ultimately, the series proved successful, with over 3.5 million players across all versions and formats. ■

FACT

One final title, Online Games: Dai Guruguru Onsen, was released on the PS2 in late 2002, containing all the games from the second and third Dreamcast entries.

HANAGUMI TAISEN COLUMNS 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Tenky

THE FIRST HANAGUMI Taisen Columns game was released on the Saturn and in arcades in 1997, with this Dreamcast sequel following a few years later. Like its predecessor, it's a special version of Sega's popular puzzle game Columns, themed around the Sakura Taisen series of visual novels. This sequel features characters from Sakura Taisen 2 (see later in this section), and includes a 1P vs CPU battle mode, a two-player battle mode – in both offline and online flavours – and a Story mode that gives more details on the lives of the Flower Division members. Of course, if you're a stickler for tradition and just want to play plain old single-player Columns without any battle or story nonsense, you can do that too. ■

FACT

At the Sega Fes 2019 event in Japan, players could play the original Hanagumi Taisen Columns using a comically enormous Sega Saturn controller.

HAPPY BREEDING

Year	2003
Publisher	Princess Soft
Developer	Princess Soft

YOU MAY THINK the name Happy Breeding is dodgy enough, but the title only scratches the surface of this bizarre visual novel. You play as a chap who's recently moved out of his parents' home and is now living on his own in a big house. Events conspire and you eventually end up with four attractive but mysterious girls living in the house with you, and while there's a nice family atmosphere going, it's inevitable that you're going to end up falling in love with one of them. Oh, and it just so happens that all four girls are actually animals – a dog, a bird, a cat and a fish – who've been turned human by a witch. But hey, don't let that stop you. ■

FACT

As with many Dreamcast visual novels, there's a PC version which is rated 18+ and is more explicit, so think yourself lucky this version decides chatting up dog-girls is the line in the sand.

HAPPY LESSON

Year	2001
Publisher	Datam Polystar
Developer	Fupac

IF I WAS TO tell you that Happy Lesson is a dating sim starring a high school student, you'd probably instantly imagine your typical visual novel where you try to romance a bunch of schoolgirls. Instead, this game (based on a 'magazine game' in which readers helped shape the story) has you playing as an orphaned teenager whose grades start to slip. To remedy this, five of his school teachers, in a truly bizarre scheme, decide to all move in with him and essentially become his five mothers. Cue a non-sexual but still rather iffy game in which you have to juggle the moods of all five teacher-mums by keeping them all happy while also considering the inevitable romance elements that eventually come into play. ■

FACT

The game had an annoying bug: once the player triggers the normal ending, it remains triggered and the other endings can't be seen, meaning you have to start all over again.

HAPPY LESSON: FIRST LESSON

Year 2000
Publisher Datam Polystar
Developer Fupac

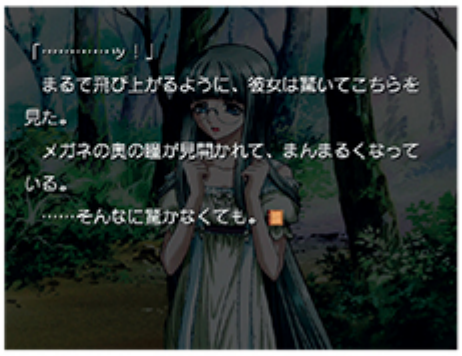
AROUND SEVEN MONTHS before the Happy Lesson visual novel was released, fans of the manga were partly satiated with First Lesson, a sort of multimedia disc for the Dreamcast. Rather than a full game, First Lesson consisted of a number of smaller sections, including a collection of concept art for the upcoming game's settings, interviews with the anime's voice actors, songs for each of the characters, and a collection of reader entries of potential storylines submitted to *Dengeki G's Magazine* (which is where the series originated). It also includes a mini-game called Happy Slot, which you'll doubtless be relieved to hear is a slot machine. First Lesson was limited to 20,000 copies but is easy enough to find online at a reasonable price. ■

FACT

Both First Lesson and the main Happy Lesson game included Happy Net, a built-in web browser with an exclusive Happy Lesson site that could only be accessed through it.

HARUSAME YOUBI

Year 2001
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Sims



THINGS AREN'T GOING well for Yu Nakagaki. He's just failed his school entrance exams, and on top of that he's suffering from a broken heart. What Yu needs is a change of pace, pronto, so when his aunt invites him to work part time at Harusame, her ryokan (a sort of Japanese inn which includes matted rooms and communal baths) he decides to take her up on her offer. Naturally, since this is a visual novel, Yu ends up meeting a bunch of ladies – workers and customers – but there's a little more to this story too. It turns out one of the other reasons Yu's aunt wants him around is because there have been a number of odd, mystical incidents taking place at the inn. ■

FACT

Ryokan have existed since the eighth century. Houshi Ryokan in Ishikawa was built in 718 AD and is the second-oldest hotel in the world (the oldest, from 708 AD, is also in Japan).

HEISEI MAHJONG-SHOU

Year 2000
Publisher Micronet
Developer Micronet

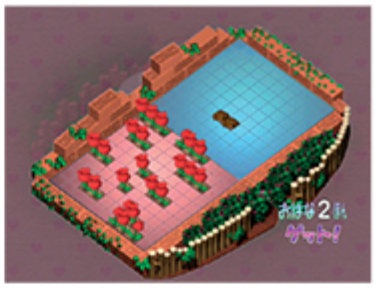
THIS MAHJONG TITLE has a strong focus on multiplayer, encouraging you to find other real-life people to play against. The game lets players access Heisei Mahjong Island, an elaborate waiting room where you can chat to other players online and find a potential opponent. It also supports the Dreamcast Microphone, allowing you to voice chat with your opponent instead of having to type everything out (as was common with most online Dreamcast games). The game also held regular online tournaments, including the All Japan Mahjong Tournament in which actual Japan Professional Mahjong League (JPML) members would take part to show off their mahjong chops. This one wasn't messing around when it came to its mahjong, basically. ■

FACT

The game also let you sit a mahjong certification exam authorised by the JPML. If you passed, you could pay to have a diploma sent to you.

HELLO KITTY NO GARDEN PANIC

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Fortyfive



IN NOVEMBER 1999, Sega released two limited edition Dreamcast consoles – a transparent pink one and a transparent blue one – branded with Hello Kitty. These consoles also included a copy of Hello Kitty no Garden Panic, a puzzle game that wasn't sold separately and could only be obtained by buying a console. Developed by FortyFive, Garden Panic is a reskin of one of its other games, Tsuushin Taisen Logic Battle Daisessen, with Hello Kitty and chums slapped on it. Like that game, it's essentially an elaborate take on Battleship, with players trying to stop slugs from taking over Kitty's garden and eating her flowers. It was a fun freebie, though probably not worth buying a whole second console for. ■

FACT

The Hello Kitty consoles also came with a controller, a VMU and a Dreamcast keyboard, all in transparent pink or blue plastic with Hello Kitty's face on them.

HELLO KITTY NO LOVELY FRUIT PARK

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

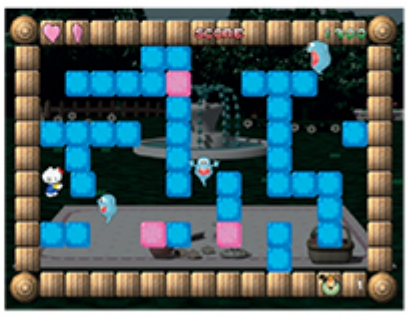
IF YOU WERE a big Hello Kitty fan but couldn't justify buying an entirely new console just to play Hello Kitty no Garden Panic, this was also released on the same day and could actually be bought at retail. It's another reskin, though, this time of Get!! Colonies. As in that title, Lovely Fruit Park is a puzzle game for up to four players where the aim is to take control of the board by claiming as much of it as possible. Whereas in Get!! Colonies players were simply placing down coloured balls, here each character is placing down their own type of fruit instead. Other than that, it's basically the exact same premise. ■

FACT

These games weren't Sega's first dabbling with Hello Kitty. The Sega Pico educational games system got seven separate Hello Kitty titles in Japan.

HELLO KITTY NO MAGICAL BLOCK

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega



SEGA WASN'T DONE with Hello Kitty after the launch of the consoles and the two games in 1999. Instead, it released three more Hello Kitty games in 2000 (and by sheer chance all five titles were released in both chronological and alphabetical order, which is useful for this book). The third game, Hello Kitty no Magical Block, is another puzzler, and while it isn't a reskin this time, it is a remake: of Sega's 1982 arcade game Pengo, which was about a penguin sliding ice blocks into enemies to crush them. Magical Block is the same concept, only this time Kitty has to crush ghosts with her blocks. It's fun enough but as simple as its early '80s arcade roots suggest. ■

FACT

Pengo's music was a straight lift of that annoying audio earworm, 'Popcorn' (you know the one). Thankfully, Magical Block has its own music.

HELLO KITTY NO OTONARU MAIL

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

THE FOURTH HELLO Kitty release on the Dreamcast wasn't a game this time, but a piece of software focused mainly on sending and receiving Hello Kitty themed emails. 'Otonaru' means 'sounds', and that's one of the main gimmicks here: the game features around 200 sound effects which can be applied to your emails. As you read through your email (the text turns black like a karaoke machine), the sounds trigger at the right time. There are also 100 different letterhead types for customising your emails, as well as around 100 stamps which can be added to your message. It could also be integrated with other web mail services (or Sega's own Dream Passport and DreamFlyer) to have Kitty deliver your email to you as well. ■

FACT

If all these Hello Kitty titles feel a little basic, don't worry: they were at least sold at a budget price of ¥2,940 (around $20).

HELLO KITTY NO WAKU WAKU COOKIES

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

THE FIFTH AND final Hello Kitty game on Dreamcast takes one last trip back to the puzzle genre. Kitty has decided to help her mum make treats for the upcoming carnival, so it's up to her to make as many bags of cookies as she can. The game is played on a large grid where coloured cookies spawn frequently. You have to hop from square to square, picking up and dropping cookies to lie three of the same colour next to each other: this makes them disappear. You can also stack cookies to gain extra points when they're cleared, and set up chain reactions. The game has a Story mode as well as a more challenging endless mode. ■

FACT

There have been around 40 Hello Kitty games released in Japan over the years (not counting mobile titles).

HIMITSU: YUI GA ITA NATSU

Year 2001
Publisher Starfish
Developer Starfish

ROUGHLY TRANSLATED AS The Secret: The Summer Yui was There, this is a visual novel about a childhood promise being fulfilled and leading to romance. Years ago, a bunch of school friends promised to meet up at the school while it was closed for the summer, in order to look for a phantom butterfly. Learning that a huge typhoon was due to hit that day, most of the friends chose not to turn up, leaving only one girl, Yui. While she was there the school caught fire. Eight years later, the friends meet up again, determined to find the butterfly this time. This is a straightforward example of the genre, albeit with some supernatural elements. ■

FACT

Publisher Starfish was set up in 1993 by former Hot-B developers, after that studio was shut down. It went on to make sequels to Hot-B titles, including its Black Bass fishing games.

HUNDRED SWORDS

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Smilebit

THIS IS A real-time strategy game based around a medieval-style conflict. The game has an Adventure mode and a Mission mode: the former is a six-episode story split into two halves. In the first you play as Larf, the 15-year-old king of the horse-like Naruaval tribe, while in the second you play as Fals, the 16-year-old queen of the magical Gran tribe. Larf and Gran have a bit of a thing for each other, there's just the small matter of this pesky war in the way. The Mission mode, meanwhile, consists of 18 separate missions which can earn the player special power-up items called 'shells': these can then be used during the game's online multiplayer mode to give the player an edge in combat. ■

FACT

Hundred Swords may not have been given an English language release on the Dreamcast, but Sega did at least release the PC version in North America and Europe.

IDOL JANSHI WO TSUKUCCHAOU

Year 1999
Publisher Jaleco Entertainment
Developer Jaleco Entertainment

THIS IS THE ninth iteration of the Idol Janshi Suchie-Pai series of battle mahjong video games, which started on the Super Famicom back in 1993. It uses the same story as the arcade game Idol Janshi Suchie-Pai III released the same year, but whereas that game involved beating girls at mahjong to make them undress, this game is notably more innocent with none of that malarkey going on. There's a Scenario mode, in which Suchie-Pai is trying to clear her name after a fake Suchie-Pai riot breaks out. It soon turns out this imitator is actually an android called Claire, and if you clear Scenario mode with at least two characters you unlock a Making mode where you can collect outfits to dress Claire up. ■

FACT

The series' characters were designed by Kenichi Sonoda, who's best known for designing the characters and mechs in the anime series Bubblegum Crisis.

IKARUGA

Year 2002
Publisher Treasure
Developer Treasure

IKARUGA WAS ONE of the most imported Japan-only Dreamcast games, mainly because of its quality. The game's main gimmick is the ability to switch your ship's polarity: all the bullets in the game are either white or black, and if your ship is the same colour as a bullet you'll absorb it without taking damage. You may think that makes the game easier but here's the (other) twist: enemies are also either black or white, and your bullets are much stronger if they're the opposite colour. This invariably leads to situations where you deliberately put yourself at risk by switching to the opposite colour of incoming ammo in order to improve your shot power and take out bosses quicker. ■

FACT

Ikaruga is available digitally on PC, Switch, PS4 (and therefore PS5) and Xbox 360 (playable on Xbox One and Series X/S), so there's no need to buy a pricey Dreamcast import.

INOUE RYOKO: LAST SCENE

Year 2001
Publisher Datam Polystar
Developer Datam Polystar

THIS ISN'T REALLY a game as such, and is more of a 'fan disc' for players who enjoyed Inoue Ryoko: Roommate (glance slightly to the right: there it is). The main feature is the ability to have a daily conversation with Ryoko, a feature that was borrowed from a previous Saturn fan disc called Ryoko's Chat Room. As well as this, there's a 'CG mode' which lets you view images of Ryoko, as well as a music mode where you can hear music, including four new songs created specifically for this disc. The content is then rounded off with a fortune telling mode and a slightly odd section (more so than the others) where Ryoko explains the 'language of flowers' to you. ■

FACT

There were a total of four main games in the Roommate series on the Saturn, three of which featured Ryoko as the roommate in question.

INOUE RYOKO: ROOMMATE

Year 2001
Publisher Datam Polystar
Developer Fupac

THIS VISUAL NOVEL is a port of a 1997 Sega Saturn title, which itself was the first in a series of games called Roommate. The star of the show is Ryoko Inoue, a 17-year-old girl who's stayed behind in Tokyo to finish school while her family moves to New York. Her dad is friends with your dad, and has asked if Ryoko can move in with you and stay in your spare room while she finished her studies, so cue a pleasantly awkward situation in which you have to live with an endearing yet emotionally distraught teenager who misses her family. While the Saturn version used the console's internal clock to make things move along in real time, the Dreamcast version doesn't do this. ■

FACT

The game includes a questionnaire postcard. Five people who sent it away would win a recorded voice message from Ryoko's actor, addressing them by name.

INTERLUDE

Year 2003
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer LongShot

THIS VISUAL NOVEL has you playing as a 16-year-old student, but in reality it's not really about him: instead, it consists of three parallel storylines involving three women in his life. Maiko is his best friend and his crush, and her story is typical by-the-book school relationship stuff. Izumi is an office worker who the protagonist rescues from an attempted molestation. And then there's Aya, a mysterious girl who the protagonist meets one day. It soon turns out Aya lives in a city that's completely empty except for her, and it's at this point where the story goes a bit sci-fi and, to be frank, utterly confusing. There's a three-episode anime which was translated to English and is a tad easier to follow. A tad. ■

FACT

The limited edition comes in two different covers: one where Maiko is holding a carton of strawberry milk, and one where she isn't. The milk version is rarer.

IRIS

Year 2003
Publisher Kid
Developer Kid

IRIS IS A romance-themed visual novel which is fairly tame in terms of content but, given its junior high school setting (which means the characters are aged between 12–15), is still a somewhat uncomfortable premise when viewed with western eyes. The game follows Haruki Setohara, a student who is finding love for the first time. Over the course of a semester there are six different girls you can potentially get to fall for you. It's all innocent enough but none of this really escapes from the fact that anyone buying it is still buying a game whose back of the box blurb describes your potential romantic partners as 'more than children but less than adults', so… yeah. ■

FACT

While many Dreamcast visual novels have limited edition versions, Iris has a particularly interesting one: it comes in a big box which includes the game and a hand puppet.

IZUMO

Year	2004
Publisher	Symbio Planning
Developer	Studio e-go

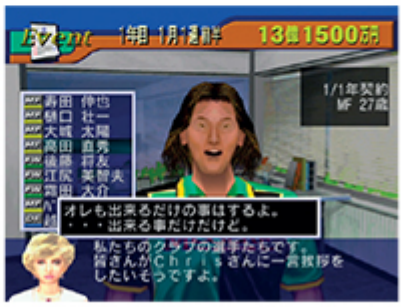
IZUMO IS A mature title (rated 18 by Japanese rating organisation CERO, though still cut compared to the PC version) which is part RPG, part visual novel. Hikaru Touma is a student at the prestigious Izumo private academy, but he keeps having dreams where a woman is trying to tell him something. One day he tries to retrace the steps he took in his dream and suddenly finds himself transferred to the world of Japanese mythology. Oh, and there's giant spiders in it. Each chapter is split into visual novel text dialogue and turn-based RPG combat, the latter presented with an isometric viewpoint which can be rotated in 3D. The game came with one of 20 random prepaid phone cards with artwork on it. ■

FACT

Izumo got a 12-episode anime series (which was suitable for kids), and a six-volume 18+ rated anime series (which absolutely, categorically was not).

J-LEAGUE PRO SOCCER CLUB O TSUKUROU!

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega R&D 6



THIS IS THE third game in what would become known as Saka Tsuku (Let's Make Soccer), Sega's series of football management games. With an official J. League licence, the game lets players create their own football team, start them in the J2 League and try to get them promoted to J1 before ultimately winning the championship. Because the game is about owning a team rather than simply managing it (though you do get to be the manager too, because why not), you control every aspect including facilities and personnel. As well as attempting to win the J. League offline, you can also take your team online to challenge other players' squads. ■

FACT

Amazingly, the game has its own built-in music composer mode so you can create your club's official anthem to play before matches.

J-LEAGUE SPECTACLE SOCCER

Year	2002
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Smilebit

DON'T WORRY, IT'S not compulsory to wear glasses while playing football in Japan. Spectacle Soccer is instead the Japanese version of 90 Minutes: Sega Championship Football, with J. League teams added to the existing selection. For the most part the game plays just like its western equivalent when it comes to the action on the pitch, but the main extra feature in Spectacle Soccer (other than the extra teams, of course) is the ability to import your save from either Saka Tsuku Tokudaigou or its sequel: that's the follow-ups to J. League Pro Soccer Club o Tsukurou, found later in the book. This means you can take your created team from those management games and actually control the players for the first time. ■

FACT

The commentary is provided by Hiroshi Yatsuka. As a presenter on the 1991 TV show *Super Soccer Serie A*, he was one of the first in Japan to commentate on overseas football.

JAHMONG: VOICE RECOGNITION MAHJONG GAME

Year	2000
Publisher	Visit
Developer	Visit

'SPEAK WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT!' That's the claim offered by Jahmong, a mahjong game which uses the Dreamcast Microphone to… well, I mean, you can probably already tell by the title. Players can shout out phrases to control the game, and when I say 'shout' I mean it: Jahmong actually increases your luck depending on how loud you speak (which is just begging for the mic to fail to understand you, frankly). The Gourmet mode lets you travel around Japan, taking on each region's best mahjong players while also sampling their local delicacies. Speaking (ahem) of regions, the game's voice recognition not only supports standard Japanese, but can also understand various regional dialects. ■

FACT

Japan was the only region where the Dreamcast Microphone was sold separately. In the US it was bundled with Seaman and Alien Front Online, and in Europe it came with Planet Ring.

JET COASTER DREAM 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Bimboosoft
Developer	Bimboosoft

JET COASTER DREAM is the Japanese name for Coaster Works, the first of which can be found in the 'western games' section of this book. The sequel was only released in Japan and builds significantly on its predecessor by addressing its most obvious issue. Whereas the first game only lets you build rollercoasters, the sequel lets you create the entire theme park, much like the Theme Park or Rollercoaster Tycoon games. Of course, the fact that such a theme park management game is build on the foundation of a detailed rollercoaster-building sim means that you get the best of both worlds, with the ability to create some impressive structures in your park. ■

FACT

The game also includes a Free Walk mode, which lets you wander around your theme park from a first-person perspective and admire your coasters from ground level.

JIKKYOU POWERFUL PRO YAKYUU DREAMCAST EDITION

Year	2000
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami / Tose

THE JIKKYOU POWERFUL Pro Yakyuu series is easily the most popular baseball series in Japan, having been doing the rounds since the Super Famicom days. This was the only entry to be released on the Dreamcast, and is based on the 2000 Nippon Professional Baseball season, with the results from the previous season taken into account and all pre-season player transfers applied. One of the series' most popular features is the Success mode, which is essentially a career mode which usually has a different gimmick with each entry. In this game the gimmick is that your player starts off as an employee of one of three companies and has to try to become a professional baseball player while still keeping his job. ■

FACT

As of 2020, the Jikkyou Powerful Pro Yakyuu series had reached a cumulative total of 23.5 million copies sold.

JINSEI GAME FOR DREAMCAST

Year	2000
Publisher	Takara
Developer	Takara

JINSEI GAME IS better known in the west as The Game of Life, the Milton Bradley board game which became immensely popular in Japan, leading to over 40 video game versions. This is the official Dreamcast edition, which can be played with up to four players (only one controller is needed, because players take turns to play). The main difference from the real-life board game is that the Dreamcast version changes its map every time a new game is played, with event squares changing their positions. Players can also create their own avatars from a selection of facial parts and clothing, and there are also a handful of separate mini-games, just in case the board game element starts to drag. ■

FACT

The first official Jinsei Game video game was Jinsei Game Densetsu, a 1991 Game Boy RPG that played like the board game but also added monster battles.

JISSEN PACHI-SLOT HISSHOUHOU! @VPACHI KONGDOM

Year	2000
Publisher	Sammy
Developer	MaxBet

READ THE EARLIER entry for CR Hissatsu Shigotonin Pachitte Chonmage @VPACHI and are now craving even more gambling goodness? You're in luck: here's another entry in the @VPACHI series, which allowed players to connect online to submit their results for potential real-life prizes. This one is based on The Kongdom, a popular Japanese slot machine whichi was still doing the rounds in pachinko halls at the time. If players were lucky enough to pull off the unthinkable and win the game's jackpot seven times in a row, and then had this verified after submitting it online, they could win a trip to Las Vegas where they could lose their money for real. ■

FACT

The Kongdom machine has a cartoon of a big gorilla wearing a crown and smoking a golden cigar. Just in case you wondered where all the money was going.

JRA-PAT FOR DREAMCAST

Year 2000
Publisher Sega / Keiba Security Services
Developer Sega

HERE'S ANOTHER TITLE that costs a small fortune to buy these days, even though it's almost useless given that its online service shut down decades ago. It's a disc which lets players place bets on real-life horse races organised by the Japan Racing Association (the PAT stands for Personal Access Terminal, in case you're wondering). The disc isn't a complete coaster, even though its main use is now gone: there's also a short archive section giving information on some past Japanese racehorses along with footage of them in action. Perhaps more interestingly for Sega fans, the disc's sole music track was composed by Hideki Naganuma, who was best known for the Jet Set Radio soundtrack. ■

FACT

There were also JRA-PAT titles released on Nintendo's Famicom and Super Famicom consoles, each of which required a modem.

JULY

Year 1998
Publisher Fortyfive
Developer Fortyfive

GUESS WHEN THIS one is set! Actually, the story only begins in July: on 7 July 1999, to be exact, because that's when two teenagers, Makoto and Joshua, decide to start investigating the events of a terrorist attack (a bomb on a bus) which took place six years earlier. Makoto's parents died in the bombing and Joshua just wants to know who did it, and while they initially start off on their own separate investigations their paths eventually cross and, teaming up, the pair slowly discover an even more sinister (and bizarre) conspiracy to carry out a prophecy on the end of the world. July is rather linear as far as visual novels go, and is particularly heavy in text. ■

FACT

July was one of only four games that launched with the Dreamcast in Japan (the others being Virtua Fighter 3tb, Godzilla Generations and PenPen TriIcelon).

KAEN SEIBO: THE VIRGIN ON MEGIDDO

Year 2001
Publisher Kobi
Developer TamTam / Studio Line

SET IN THE future (well, 2013), Kaen Seibo follows a high school student and trainee detective called Rando Kento, who transfers to a new school in the newly built Izanami City to investigate a mysterious virus that's causing spontaneous human combustion, while also dealing with the conflict going on between the citizens living in the new high-tech cities and those remaining in the older, more traditional areas. While it's technically a visual novel, Kaen Seibo also has a bit of exploration, and when you're stuck you also have the ability to bring up a command called Reasoning, which lets your character stop and figure out what to do next. ■

FACT

The game's futuristic city is based on Tsukuba City in Japan's Kanto region, which was a rural area that was modernised in 1906 with a science park called Tsukuba Science City.

KAITOU APRICOT

Year 2003
Publisher Takuyo
Developer Takuyo

IT'S FAIR TO say the vast majority of romantic visual novels on the Dreamcast put the player in the role of a man trying to woo a bunch of women, but Kaitou Apricot does the opposite. You play as Anzu Mochizuki, who by day is a seemingly normal high school student. By night, however, she becomes a thief called Kaitou Apricot (Kaitou means 'phantom thief'). On her 17th birthday, Anzu is set to become the eighth female Kaitou Apricot in her family's history, but before she can her mother (the seventh) sets her a task: steal the heart of a man (be that a fellow student or someone older). Its unusual premise aside, it's still your typical romance-based visual novel. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version of Kaitou Apricot has more content than the 2002 PC version it's based on, with one of the side characters becoming fully romanceable. Yes, it's a word.

KANON

Year 2000
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Visual Arts / Key

ONE OF THE most popular visual novels ever released in Japan, Kanon was also the first game developed by Osaka-based Key which would go on to establish itself as one of the leading visual novel studios. You play as Yuichi Aizawa, a high school student who returns to a city he hasn't visited for seven years, and can't remember much about. As he continues to live there with his aunt and cousin, Yuichi starts recalling things that happened, and encounters with various girls help jog his memory. Kanon has a branching story with five different women to romance, and therefore has a bunch of different endings. A word of warning, though: one of these five potential romantic scenarios is with Yuichi's cousin. ■

FACT

Toei Animation made a 12-episode anime of *Kanon* in 2002. Kyoto Animation then decided in 2006 that it fancied a shot, so it made its own (much better-looking) 24-episode series.

KAROUS

Year 2007
Publisher Milestone
Developer Milestone

EVERY JOURNEY HAS to end somewhere, and the Dreamcast's journey finally ended with Karous, the last game to be officially released on the console. Developed by Milestone, which had previously released Chaos Field and Radirgy on the Dreamcast, Karous plays more like the latter with a similar cel-shaded art style and the same 'shot, sword and shield' weapons system. The unique gimmick is its bomb system in which, after building up a special attack gauge, you can detonate a bomb which creates a barrier around you and kills any enemies it touches, giving you more experience points. Experience can be used to upgrade the player's shot, sword and shield, which in turn multiply your score. As far as final games go, the Dreamcast got a solid one. ■

FACT

If you can play US Wii games, it's cheaper to find a copy of Ultimate Shooting Collection. Despite its generic name it's actually a compilation containing Karous, Radirgy and Chaos Field.

KAZE NO UTA

Year 2004
Publisher Rain Software
Developer Milk Soft

THIS IS A Dreamcast port of an erotic PC visual novel, but as is almost always the way, the console version was made significantly less filthy. The game takes the player to a small seaside town called Sakuragi-cho, where the male protagonist plans to spend his summer, away from all the hustle and bustle of Tokyo. Your character hasn't visited the town for a long time, and as he's there some of his long-forgotten memories make a return, inevitably leading the way for some tomfoolery with the women he encounters there. Although the Dreamcast version doesn't have the explicit scenes seen in the PC version, it does have new CG scenes, and comes with a bonus drama CD (for those who prefer aural novels over visual ones). ■

FACT

Like numerous other visual novels, Kaze no Uta would later be ported to DVD, meaning it could be played on DVD players (explicit scenes and all).

KIDOU SENKAN NADESICO: NADESICO THE MISSION

Year 1999
Publisher Kadokawa Shoten / ESP
Developer Will

THIS IS THE third game based on the popular anime series *Martian Successor Nadesico*, a sci-fi show in which the space battleship the ND-001 Nadesico does battle with a race of aliens called the Jovian Lizards. The game is a fairly text-heavy battle sim which will be a struggle for anyone with little to no knowledge of Japanese, but what's perhaps more interesting is the game's importance to the overall story. The anime only had one season, and its story was then continued in a Saturn game. This was followed by an animated movie, but fans who had never played the game didn't understand what was going on: this led to this Dreamcast game, which ended the story in lieu of a scrapped second season. ■

FACT

The anime series and movie were released in the west but the Saturn game wasn't, meaning the movie plot confusion extended to English-speaking audiences too.

KIDOU SENSHI GUNDAM: GIHREN NO YABOU – ZEON NO KEIFU

Year 2000
Publisher Bandai
Developer BEC

LOOSELY TRANSLATED AS Mobile Suit Gundam: Gihren's Ambition – Zeon's Lineage, this *Gundam* game takes place during the series' *One Year War* storyline, where the Earth Federation Space Forces and the Principality of Zeon are locked in a brutal conflict. The game lets you take control of either side, but whatever you choose you can expect to be hit with one of the most complex turn-based strategy games on the console, with well over 100 characters appearing from a variety of different Gundam series. Winning your fights is only half the battle in this game: you also have to keep your faction's parliament happy and make sure the war doesn't negatively affect your population, otherwise parliament may vote to end the war (and your game). ■

FACT

The game is a sequel to the first Gihren no Yabou on the Saturn, which was no less complicated to learn how to play.

KIDOU SENSHI GUNDAM: RENPOU VS. ZEON DX

Year 2002
Publisher Bandai
Developer Capcom

IF YOU READ the last entry and thought 'aww, I wanted to play a Gundam game set during the One Year War but that sounds impossible to play', then your luck just took a positive turn. Renpou vs Zeon was originally released in arcades in 2001 before coming to the Dreamcast in an enhanced DX version the following year. Given its coin-op roots, then, it's a far more action-oriented game, played from a third-person perspective and letting you once again choose to play as either the Federation or Zeon through a lengthy campaign. There's still a lot of Japanese dialogue, meaning those with no knowledge of the language will struggle to follow the plot, but the actual gameplay should make Gundam fans happy. ■

FACT

Once you beat the Campaign you unlock Extra mode, where you can choose any mobile suit from any side. Fighting for Zeon in a Federation suit? Sheer madness.

KIMIGA NOZOMU EIEN

Year 2002
Publisher Alchemist
Developer HuneX

WESTERN ANIME FANS may know this series as *Rumbling Hearts*, which is what it was named when Funimation released the anime adaptation in North America. Before the anime, however, came this visual novel, which falls into what's known as the 'depression game' genre in Japan, in which a seemingly romantic premise turns tragic. In this case, a love triangle gets one of its edges severely dented when one of the characters is involved in a serious accident and ends up in a coma. As with many romance visual novels there's a branching story here, with eight different girls to potentially romance, and multiple playthroughs needed to pick all the different choices and see all the possible endings. ■

FACT

The first 30,000 copies of the game were a special edition which came with a calendar.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS 2000

Year 2002
Publisher Playmore
Developer SNK

ALTHOUGH THE WEST got Dreamcast ports of KOF 98 (renamed Dream Match 99) and KOF 99, that's where it stopped. In Japan, Dreamcast owners would continue to get the next three games in the series. In KOF 2000 the 3v3 team format returns (with 36 playable fighters this time) and so does the Striker system, where you choose a fourth fighter who can jump in and help out mid-fight. This time, however, instead of just choosing a Striker from the existing roster, each character has what's called Another Striker, a non-roster fighter who either comes from a previous SNK game or is a completely original character. What's more, you can now call on Strikers whenever you want, instead of only when you're standing still. ■

FACT

SNK went bankrupt in 2001 before releasing KOF 2000 on Dreamcast. The port was published by Playmore, a new company set up by SNK founder Eikichi Kawasaki.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS 2001

Year	2002
Publisher	Playmore
Developer	SNK / Eolith

FOLLOWING SNK'S BANKRUPTCY, South Korean studio Eolith took on co-development duties for the King of Fighters series. KOF 2001 divided players over the revamps it introduced, which some felt had gone a little far. While the Strikers system is back again, this time players simply choose four fighters and can assign them however they choose: four fighters with no Strikers, all the way down to one fighter with three Strikers. Strikers are now summoned with your Power Gauge (which also performs super moves), and the number of Strikers determines how much stock your Power Gauge can hold: if you had one fighter and three Strikers, for example, you could hold up to four rapid-charging stocks, to make up for only having one fighter. ■

FACT

Eolith was helped during development by BrezzaSoft, a new studio set up by former SNK employees.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS 2002: CHALLENGE TO ULTIMATE BATTLE

Year	2003
Publisher	Playmore
Developer	Playmore

THE FIFTH AND final KOF game on Dreamcast dialled back some of the more extreme changes made in the previous game to create something fans felt a little more comfortable with. The most notable example of this is the decision to ditch the Strikers system used in KOF 99, 2000 and 2001 and go back to a straightforward 3v3 system again. The roster consists of 41 characters spanning the history of the series, but fans of the arcade version were a tad disappointed that popular characters King and Shingo weren't included. This was remedied for the Dreamcast version, which reintroduced both characters. ■

FACT

KOF 2002 was remade in 2009 as KOF 2002: Unlimited Match. It contained an enormous 66 fighters and a newly arranged soundtrack.

KITA E. PHOTO MEMORIES

Year	1999
Publisher	Hudson Soft
Developer	Hudson Soft

THIS IS A fandisc follow-up to Kita e. White Illumination with its own smaller story. While that game ends with a New Year's smooch, Photo Memories moves the story on a further six months and has you returning to Hokkaido again in the summer to catch up with your lady friend from the previous game. Because White Illumination had eight different women to potentially end up with, Photo Memories lets you choose your partner, essentially giving you eight mini stories in one. The game's main gimmick, as the title suggests, is that now you're able to take photos of your partner as you explore Hokkaido. These can then be saved to your VMU and browsed later in a gallery, if that's your thing. ■

FACT

Kita e. would eventually get a 'proper' sequel called Diamond Dust, which was released exclusively on PS2.

KITA E. WHITE ILLUMINATION

Year	1999
Publisher	Hudson Soft
Developer	Sega / Hudson Soft

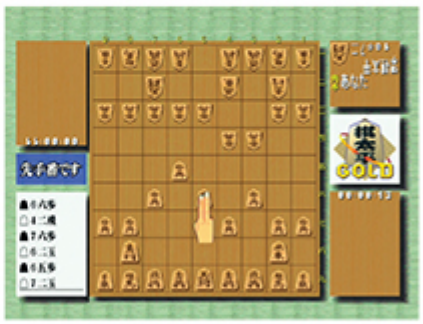
THIS DATING SIM is different from most other games in the genre, in that while it still uses illustrated characters they're placed on top of actual photos of real-life places. In this case the real-life location in question is Sapporo in Hokkaido, where your character (a 17-year-old student) has travelled from Tokyo to stay with the family of 16-year-old Kotori. During your travels there are eight potential girls to meet and fall in love with, though given the ages of some of your potential partners it's probably just as well that there's nothing graphic in this one. While exploring Sapporo (many real-life shops and restaurants appear in the game), you can enjoy various pastimes like karaoke or shopping. ■

FACT

A 12-episode anime based on the sequel Diamond Dust was released in the west as *Diamond Daydreams*. It followed six girls, each of whom got two episodes.

KITAIHEI GOLD

Year 1999
Publisher NetVillage
Developer SPS



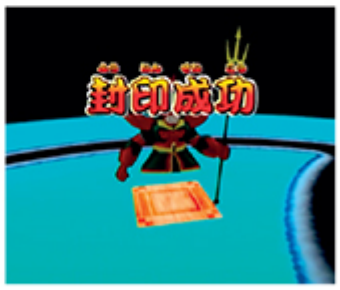
ONE OF THE numerous shogi games available on the Dreamcast, Kitahei Gold at least has some interesting features, even if one of them – cross-platform online multiplayer against owners of the PC game – no longer works these days. When playing against a CPU opponent, players can teach it to learn how they themselves play, essentially creating an AI doppelganger players can use to play shogi against themselves. You can also record and replay the gameplay so you can review your previous games to study where you went wrong, and if you're the type who enjoys tsume-shogi (small puzzles where you have to try and checkmate the king) you can enter them into Kitahei Gold and it'll show you how to solve them. ■

FACT

Tsume-shogi problems are designed to teach players how to win checkmate situations, so that they can replicate them if they happen in a real-life game.

KITERETSU BOY'S GAN-GA-GAN

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega



THIS RATHER STRANGE game is a bit like a Pokémon-style monster catching RPG, but one that uses the Dreamcast Microphone during battles. 108 Kotodamasi (spirits) have been released into the human world, so it's up to you to seal them all again by taking part in battles using what's helpfully dubbed the 'Shout Battle System'. As you shout specific words into the microphone, the letters appear on the screen and fly towards the Kotodamasi you're fighting, damaging it. As you capture each Kotodamasi it can join your team and take part in battles on your behalf. There's also a mini-game called the Kotodamasi Pictorial Book, where you can see which spirits you've caught already. ■

FACT

The game was available standalone or bundled with a Dreamcast Microphone, for those who didn't have one yet and were waiting for the right word-yelling title to come along.

KONOHANA: TRUE REPORT

Year 2001
Publisher Success
Developer Vridge

FINALLY, A HIGH school visual novel that isn't about chatting up girls! Megumi Momoi is a second-year student who's just moved to Konohana Academy and is hoping for a quiet school life, but when one of the school's teachers is found murdered in the school yard before term even begins, it's clear that isn't going to happen. Megumi and his classmate Miako decide they're going to investigate what happened: not because they have any real interest in justice or anything like that, but because Miako fancies herself as a bit of a journalist and she thinks if she solves the murder that will convince the school to approve the creation of a newspaper club. Good to see she has her priorities straight. ■

FACT

In real life, Konohana-ku is one of 24 regional 'wards' in Osaka and is home to Universal Studios Japan, where the first Super Nintendo World was built.

KONOHANA 2: TODOKE KANAI REQUIEM

Year 2002
Publisher Success
Developer Vridge

THE SEQUEL TO Konohana takes place a few months after the events of the original game, where all the furore of the whole 'murdered teacher' thing has finally died down. That is, until Shinobu Sakurada, a transfer from Megumi's former school, decides to set up her own detective club in direct competition to Megumi and Miako's newspaper club. And it just so happens there's another murder for them to solve: this time it's a fire that recently broke out in the school basketball team's club room, resulting in the death of one third year student and the discovery of a mysterious coin at the scene of the incident. Cue another visual novel investigation as Megumi and Miako try to figure out what's going on. ■

FACT

A total of four Konohana games would eventually be developed, with the third and fourth games released exclusively on PS2.

KUON NO KIZUNA: SAIRIN MIKOTONORI

Year 2000
Publisher Fog
Developer Use

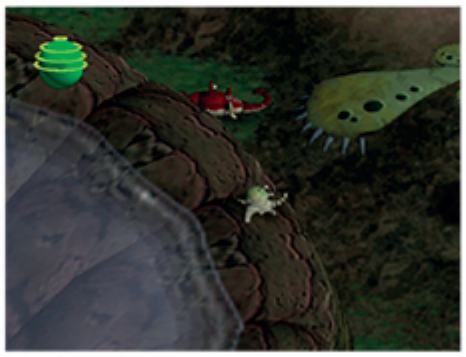
THIS EPIC VISUAL novel (it's said to take around 60 hours to complete) covers a story spanning 1000 years. Takeru Mikado is a high school student who is surprised when new student Satoko vows to kill him. It soon emerges that they're both the reincarnations of a man and goddess who fell in love 1,000 years ago and have been constantly reincarnating to fight an evil god. The game is split into four chapters covering numerous eras in Japanese history. Originally released on the PlayStation, this Dreamcast version adds a new scenario at the end, though fans of the PlayStation version complained that it had a much faster pace and ended on a cliffhanger, unlike the main game. ■

FACT

A PC remake of the game was released in 2011. It was called The Origin, was fully voiced and added pornographic scenes.

L.O.L. LACK OF LOVE

Year 2000
Publisher ASCII Entertainment
Developer Lovedelic



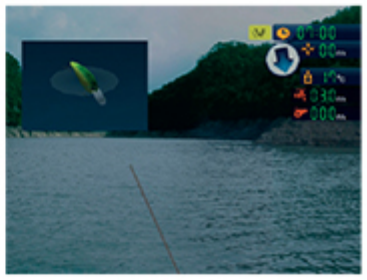
A TRULY ORIGINAL game that enthralled some and confused others, L.O.L. starts off with a small egg underwater which soon hatches. Taking control of the small organism inside, it's up to you to help the creature not only survive, but ultimately thrive and evolve through a series of forms. You do this by communicating with other (friendly) creatures, eating others – hey, nature is nature – and establishing relationships with other species. With practically no on-screen HUD information (there's no life bar or progress meters or anything like that), it's up to the player to figure out when their little creature needs to eat, when to sleep and when to pee. Yes, really. ■

FACT

L.O.L. was designed by Kenichi Nishi, who had previously worked on Chrono Trigger and Super Mario RPG. He went on to found Skip, best known for the Chibi-Robo games.

LAKE MASTERS PRO DREAMCAST PLUS!

Year 2000
Publisher Dazz
Developer Nexus Interact



THE DREAMCAST CERTAINLY wasn't short of fishing games – that's what happens when you release an official Fishing Controller – and Lake Masters Pro can certainly be described as 'another one'. This one leans heavier towards the simulation side of things and takes players on a trip around some of Japan's best fishing spots. There are 130 fishing points in total covering 18 lakes, from the Hachiro Lagoon in the north to the Kitayama Dam in the south. The game's Travel mode takes you across all 18 locations in search of a 'phantom bass'. There's also a unique lure-crafting system, where you can earn lure parts by competing in tournaments then combine them to create your own original lures. ■

FACT

Japanese legend says that Hachiro Lagoon was named after a man who was transformed into a dragon and chose the lake to be his home. It's basically Loch Ness if Nessie was a person too.

LANGRISSER MILLENNIUM

Year 1999
Publisher Masaya
Developer NCS / Santa Entertainment

THE MAIN SERIES of five Langrisser RPGs started on the Mega Drive and ended on the Saturn. This game, developed by a new team and not considered a main entry, features five protagonists who are each trying to unify the continents of Divernia and Illuminia. Each of the five playable characters starts with their own mini-story, mostly involving capturing a couple of castles, before a notable event occurs that leads to the rest of the game, in which the aim is to conquer the continent by controlling as many castles as you can. Although the game feels like a tactical RPG at times, combat is played out in real time, with you able to move your character around freely while fighting. ■

FACT

After the original Langrisser (Warsong in the US), the series wouldn't appear in the west again for another 25 years, when Langrisser Re:Incarnation was released on the 3DS.

LOVE HINA: SMILE AGAIN

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	FortyFive

THE SECOND OF two Love Hina games to appear on the Dreamcast, Smile Again is a sequel of sorts to Totsuzen no Engage Happening and provides the player with nine new scenarios to play through. Like its predecessor, its story is based on a luck-based system where your decisions can only affect the plot to a degree. In between certain scenarios, the player is given a roulette wheel with X's and O's on it. If you land on an O it's all good and the story can progress as normal, but if you land on an X the storyline will take a negative turn and it'll be up to you to turn it around somehow. ■

FACT

Smile Again comes in an enormous box which includes a pendant, a placemat, a bowl, chopsticks and a bath towel, among other things.

LOVE HINA: TOTSUZEN NO ENGAGE HAPPENING

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	FortyFive

LOVE HINA WAS originally a manga series which appeared in *Weekly Shonen Magazine* from 1998 and was popular enough to spawn an anime and numerous games. This one, the first to arrive on Dreamcast, is a visual novel in which you play as Keitaro Urashima, who's found himself managing a girls-only dormitory while he tries to pass an entrance exam for university. The Dreamcast games introduce a new character, Mizuho, who's hired by Keitaro's granny to tutor him and ends up dragged into the romance-based hijinks that inevitably ensue when you put a bunch of students in a visual novel. The limited edition comes with a giant plush turtle, a towel, a clock and a wooden talisman for good luck at school. ■

FACT

The first game based on the manga was Love Hina Pocket, which was released on the Game Boy a month before the Dreamcast title.

MABOROSHI TSUKIYO

Year	1999
Publisher	Sims
Developer	Sims

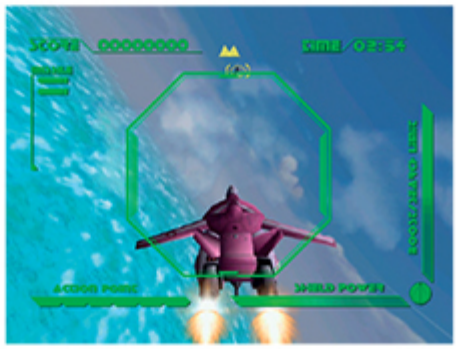
TAKASHI TANAKA IS a third-year high school student who lives alone in a flat. Takashi was named after his great-grandfather, with whom he apparently shared a strong resemblance. One day, while walking alone in the park, he sees a mysterious girl who calls out his name then disappears. It turns out this girl, Ayame, died in the great Kanto earthquake of 1923 and doesn't realise she's actually a ghost. And if that's not enough of a twist for you, get this: the reason Ayame shouted out Takashi's name is because she used to be in a relationship with Takashi's great-grandfather. Of course, that doesn't stop this visual novel from turning into a dating sim where you try to chat up your ancestor's former lover. ■

FACT

The great Kanto earthquake killed between 105,000–145,000 people and led to the Kanto massacre, where around 6,000 Koreans living in Japan were killed after being falsely accused of poisoning the food supply.

MACROSS M3

Year	2001
Publisher	Shoeisha
Developer	Warashi



THIS THIRD-PERSON ACTION game is based on the hugely popular *Macross* anime and is considered a prequel to its Macross 7 series. Set between 2014 and 2030, which until that point was a period never really covered on the show, the game's 18 stages each let you choose a pilot and their 'variable fighter', then get stuck into destroying some bad guys. Simply clearing each stage is one thing but doing it efficiently is more important: the better your score and clear time, the more equipment available to you in the next stage. What's more, if you fail to clear each stage with more than 20 per cent of the time remaining, you can't see the game's best ending. ■

FACT

One of the game's big selling points was the first chance to see two new mechs, the VF-3000 Crusader and VF-9 Cutlass, each co-designed by series creator Shouji Kawamori.

MAGIC: THE GATHERING

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Alfa System

IT'S FAIR TO say the Magic: The Gathering fanbase are a devoted bunch, so spare a thought for Dreamcast-owning fans in the west who had to wade through Japanese text to get their fix on Sega's console. As with the real thing, it's a card-battling game, specifically taking cards from the game's Sixth Edition as well as its expansions Alliances and Tempest. It's set in Celesta, a plane that only featured in the Dreamcast game, which contains five separate regions (one for each colour of card in Magic: The Gathering). For those not familiar with the series, the game came with an extensive tutorial designed to teach them the rules. ■

FACT

The game introduced 10 new cards that couldn't be replicated in real life because they relied on random number-generating effects.

MAHJONG TAIKAI II SPECIAL

Year 1999
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

LISTEN, PLAYING MAHJONG is all well and good, but what if you could play mahjong against Abraham Lincoln? Don't answer that, I already know it's one of your lifetime goals. Luckily for you, Mahjong Taikai II Special allows you to finally experience it, and it's not just the 16th US president you'll be going up against. The game lets you play mahjong against 23 famous historical figures and fictional characters, including the likes of Sherlock Holmes, Confucius, Mozart, Little Red Riding Hood, Cleopatra, Cinderella, Napoleon and Joan of Arc. You can also play against Nostradamus but that one feels a little iffy because surely he'd be able to predict what's going to happen. ■

FACT

There is no documented historical evidence that Abraham Lincoln loved a wee game of Mahjong to pass the time.

MAJO NO OCHAKAI

Year 2003
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer FrontWing

THIS VISUAL NOVEL'S title translates to Witch's Tea Party, so guess who you'll be trying to get romantic with this time. The story goes that magicians have been in hiding for hundreds of years because they think the human race are scared of their magical powers and will persecute them. Centuries later, to see if human-wizard relations have improved, a small group of young witches is sent to the human world to see if they can get along with the humans they meet and form a bond. You play as Rokusuke, a high school student – it's always a high school student – who finds himself interacting with these witches. The game's logo says 'Majyo no Otya Kai' which isn't strictly correct, but gets points for trying. ■

FACT

If you fancy playing the game in English, it was released as an interactive DVD in the US under the title Tea Society of a Witch, and can be played via a DVD player.

MARIE TO ELIE ATELIER: SALBERG NO RENKINJUTSUSHI 1 & 2

Year 2001
Publisher Kool Kizz
Developer Kool Kizz

THIS COMPILATION CONSISTS of Marie no Atelier and Elie no Atelier, two RPG games previously released on the Saturn. In the first game, players control Marie, a magic school student who's in serious danger of flunking and being kicked out. She's been told she can graduate if she studies while managing an alchemy shop for five years, and is able to create one high-level item. The sequel follows Elie, a girl who joins the same magic school to become an alchemist after Marie, now aged 25, saved her life. The game comes with a bonus disc which includes an audio drama and a teaser video for the upcoming third game, Atelier Lily on PS2. ■

FACT

The disc contained content that could be played on a PC. Unfortunately, early copies of the game included a virus that wiped hard drives, forcing a complete reinstall of Windows.

MARIONETTE COMPANY

Year 1999
Publisher Micro Cabin
Developer Micro Cabin

WITH ALL THESE visual novels about meeting a bunch of different girls and trying to get romantic with the one you like best, wouldn't it be better if a game just let you build your own woman? Actually, don't answer that: not because it's dodgy (though it is), but because Marionette Company has already put in the hard work. One night you hear someone's weak cries coming from a cardboard box in a dark alley. Turns out it's an android girl who's broken and needs help. You therefore take her home and attempt to not only repair her with various parts but also teach her how to act human and ultimately become your companion. ■

FACT

Marionette Company has a VMU mini-game called Heartful Catch, in which you catch falling hearts to earn money which can then be used in the main game.

MARIONETTE COMPANY 2

Year 2000
Publisher Micro Cabin
Developer Micro Cabin

LET'S SAY YOU caught the woman-building bug after playing Marionette Company, and you fancy doing almost exactly the same thing again. Luckily, developer Micro Cabin has you covered there too, with the sequel to Marionette Company. The '2' in the title isn't just denoting that it's the second game, it also refers to the game's main gimmick, that this time you find two broken down android girls instead of just one. You take one of them (who's called Marine), while your obnoxious fellow student Arese takes the other (Maria). Arese doesn't think robots can be anything more than wires and doohickeys but given how you built someone near-human last time you set out to prove him wrong (even though he's right). ■

FACT

Micro Cabin was founded in 1982 and was best known for its Xak series of RPGs. It also developed the Saturn version of Tunnel B1.

MARIONETTE HANDLER

Year 1999
Publisher Micronet
Developer Micronet

IF YOU'VE EVER watched *Robot Wars* and been more fascinated by the process of building the robots themselves than the actual warring itself, then Marionette Handler may be the game for you (unless you want to specifically build a robot girl, in which case look up). You have to build your own AI-powered battle robot by purchasing and equipping different parts (there are around 120) to turn it into the ultimate fighting machine. Maintenance is important too: after fights you have to oil the motors and clean dirt from other parts. Sadly, because your Marionette is AI you don't get to control it. You can, however, save it onto a VMU and import it into your friend's copy of the game for a robo-duel. ■

FACT

The game is actually a sequel to Mega Drive game Heavy Nova and its Mega CD sequel Black Hole Assault, and is set after the war in those games ended.

MARIONETTE HANDLER 2

Year 2000
Publisher Micronet
Developer Micronet

THE SEQUEL TO Marionette Handler is more of the same, albeit with every feature improved. Like its predecessor, the aim is still to build your own Marionette robot and send it into battle against other metallic mugs to see if it can come out on top. This time there are around 200 different parts to apply to your Marionette, and the game's user interface has been tweaked to make what is, quite frankly, a rather complex game a little easier to figure out. One feature both games share is programming: rather than just sticking some weapons on your robot and flinging it out to die, you actually get to program its AI with an icon-based program language. Far easier said than done, of course. ■

FACT

Japanese publication *Dreamcast Magazine* criticised the game for its complexity, with one of its reviewers saying he gave up after an hour. And that's someone who could actually read Japanese.

MEI PURU

Year 2002
Publisher Princess Soft
Developer Princess Soft

THIS VISUAL NOVEL has you playing as Ryo, who lives near the beach with his dad (who's a technician) and a young girl called Miyu, who has no family and was taken in as a maid. All's perfectly normal until Ryo's father brings home a strange-looking girl called Rino. It turns out she's not a girl at all, but a prototype of a robot maid who Ryo's old man has been hired to create. For the next month the family has to live with Rino and test her performance, while also educating her on the ways of being a maid. The choices you make in the game will affect how Rino reacts and, naturally, there's a romance element to proceedings (and even more in the original PC version). ■

FACT

Only 10,000 copies of the game were released, and each contained a 32-page art book.

MEMORIES OFF 2ND

Year 2001
Publisher Kid
Developer Kid

THE SEQUEL TO Memories Off takes place around a year after the events of the first game, but focuses on a completely different cast of characters. The protagonist this time is Ken Inami, a 17-year-old student who works part-time at a restaurant and wants to go to film school. He's been dating a girl, Hotaru, for a while now, but the pair have reached a point in their relationship where things aren't going too great. This leads to the game's unique feature: you can choose whether to try and salvage your relationship with Hotaru, or break up with her and look for someone else, at which point the game turns into your standard multi-girl romance visual novel. ■

FACT

A series of three spin-offs called Memories Off After Rain Vol 1–3 were released on the PS2 in 2005. These are based on the first two games and tie the characters together a bit.

MEMORIES OFF COMPLETE

Year 2000
Publisher Kid
Developer Kid

NOT MANY ROMANTIC visual novels start with the protagonist having already found his true love. The problem is, Tomoya Mikami is no longer with his soulmate Ayaka, on account of her having died in a traffic accident a few years earlier. Tomoya feels it's time to stop grieving her loss and start looking for love again, so it's lucky for him that there are six different girls who can all become potential partners as the game progresses. The 'Complete' in the title refers to the fact that the Dreamcast version also includes Memories Off Pure, a spin-off originally released for the Neo Geo Pocket Color. This is set a few years earlier and lets you actually meet Ayaka in the events leading up to her demise. ■

FACT

Memories Off spawned a three-part anime movie, as well as a series of six music singles, each sung by one of the voice actors who played the six girls in the game.

MERCURIUS PRETTY: END OF THE CENTURY

Year 2000
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Longshot

THIS INTERESTING TITLE is essentially part visual novel (of sorts), part adventure game. You've been tasked with taking care of a homunculus girl (an artificial life form) and raising her, while occasionally letting her go out and explore the world of Virtua Crystal. Over the course of 48 days you're in charge of making sure she grows up well, and teaching her various things including alchemy, but there are actual consequences if you don't. The girl's personality can change depending on how well you do, and her voice actor even changes too depending on the type of homunculus you've raised. You'll know you're doing a good job if she starts liking you so much that she actively tries to talk to you unprompted. ■

FACT

A PC-98 game of the same name was released in 1994. Although this is technically a port, the Dreamcast version is very different and is far more adventure-focused.

MERGE: MARGINAL

Year 2003
Publisher Princess Soft
Developer White Clarity

HERE'S A VISUAL novel that doesn't mess around. You play as Tenshuin Azana, a lonely young lad who has no parents. One day, he discovers that his grandfather is dying, and the old man gives him the keys to his giant house in the countryside, along with the message: 'You have the right to choose.' When Tenshuin gets to what should be a deserted mansion, he instead finds five maids there, who tell him they've been waiting for him. Tus begins your typical romantic visual novel, one that's severely toned down from the 18+ rated PC version released a year earlier. To make up for this, the Dreamcast version adds some extra scenarios and (tasteful) illustrations. ■

FACT

The original PC version of Marginal was pulled from sale due to 'misuse' of the music (presumably a copyright issue). The Dreamcast version had a mostly different soundtrack.

METAL WOLF

Year 2002
Publisher Princess Soft
Developer Princess Soft

THIS CYBERPUNK STYLE visual novel is set in the distant future, where the world is run by the Planetary Development Corporation. You play as Hojo Minagi, an office worker in the corporation's Complaints Handling department, who one day meets a girl called Larisa. As often conveniently happens in visual novels, Larisa has lost her memory, and helping her recover it is crucial to discovering the secret to the central plot: in this case, it revolves around The Order, a powerful organisation which threatens to disrupt the peace. The only thing Larisa can remember is the phrase Metal Wolf, and the fact she's so handy with a gun despite being so young suggests her past may be an interesting one. ■

FACT

Like numerous other Dreamcast games, a limited edition version comes with a phone card. Phone cards were a collectable item in Japan, much like trading cards.

MILKY SEASON

Year 2002
Publisher Kid
Developer Kid

I'M NOT EVEN going to address the title of this romance visual novel, so let's just skim over it (pun always intended). Milky Season is based on a reader participation game in *Dengeki G's Magazine*, where readers had to write in with ideas on where the story should go next. The game puts you in control of a student who's also somehow been appointed the manager of a pair of dormitories at an all-girl school. There are 12 girls here to interact with over the course of a year and potentially find romance with, but with their ages (according to the official website) ranging from 17 down to just 9, it's fair to say this is a game that's best ignored. ■

FACT

Dengeki G's Magazine is a Japanese mag solely dedicated to 'bishoujo' games (visual novels based on interactions with attractive girls). Half this section of the book, basically.

MISS MOONLIGHT

Year 2001
Publisher Naxat Soft
Developer Spiel

KOUKI AKIBA IS a high-school student who lives a relatively normal life with his adoptive parents. Kouki's dad is an international negotiator, and things suddenly take an interesting turn when his old man returns from a war-torn country with a girl accompanying him. The girl, Sandia, is the princess of said nation, and has been taken out of danger while the civil war continues to rage on. Cue the inevitable awkwardness as Kouki now has to deal with an attractive foreign girl living in his home, as well as the equally awkward scenario of her transferring to his school, and of course the obvious likelihood that the two will eventually fall for each other, as is the visual novel way. ■

FACT

If you manage to get the best ending in the game, you can unlock an interview with the game's voice cast.

MISSING PARTS: THE TANTEI STORIES

Year	2002
Publisher	Fog
Developer	Fog

THIS DETECTIVE GAME was split into three separate releases for the Dreamcast, each containing two episodes in a six-episode story. You play as Kyosuke Shinigame, a young man who visits the Narumi Detective Agency to see if they can help him find his parents' missing pendant. The agency was once world renowned, but its director, the famous detective Seiji Narumi, has gone missing and now the place is a shambles. Kyuosuke decides to join the agency and become a rookie detective to help restore the agency to its former glory. The first two episodes, included here, focus on a murder at the prestigious Kihara family's mansion, and a claim that a girl idol's ghost is haunting a TV station following her suicide. ■

FACT

Missing Parts was later released on PS2. It was still sold in separate parts, but only two: Side A (eps 1–3) in 2003, and Side B (eps 4–6) in 2004.

MISSING PARTS 2: THE TANTEI STORIES

Year	2002
Publisher	Fog
Developer	Fog

THE SECOND PART of The Tantei Stories was released nine months later, and contains episodes 3 and 4 of the overall adventure. Episode 3 revolves around Kyosuke's friend Teppei, who's given a paper knife by his brother and asked to take care of it, no questions asked. When the brother goes missing and his friends start dying one after another, Kyosuke and Teppei go on a search to figure out what's happening. In Episode 4, a teacher is killed during a hospital visit, so Kyosuke investigates. When he befriends a sick girl in the hospital, it soon emerges that her teddy bear is hiding a secret. To do with the murder, I mean: it isn't racist or anything. ■

FACT

A six-part *Missing Parts* manga was published in the months between the release of Parts 2 and 3. It was a completely separate story about a spate of women going missing.

MISSING PARTS 3: THE TANTEI STORIES

Year	2003
Publisher	Fog
Developer	Fog

THE THIRD AND final part of The Tantei Stories arrived another nine months down the line, and included the last two episodes. Episode 5 opens with Kyosuke and his friends spotting the dead body of a taxi driver. The driver was the father of Mutsumi, a young delinquent that Kyosuke knew, so he tries to figure out who's responsible for his murder (and yes, it should go without saying that it ends up being more complex than it seems). Finally, the story ends with Episode 6, in which Kyosuke discovers that a charity concert set to be held is actually part of a large conspiracy. Kyosuke has to team up with his friends to expose the scandal, because he clearly can't keep his snout out of trouble. ■

FACT

All six episodes were finally compiled in a single volume in 2012, when The Tantei Stories Complete was released on the PSP, complete with a bonus side story.

MIZUIRO

Year	2002
Publisher	NEC Interchannel
Developer	HuneX

KENJI KATASE IS a high school student (why is it always a high school student?) who lives with his adopted sister Yuki. Yuki has a crush on Kenji, so I'm sure you can already tell one of the dodgy directions in which this visual novel can potentially go. The game opens with a prologue in which Kenji and Yuki are very young and meet for the first time: the choices in this section determine what happens in the present day section, when an apparent ghostly version of their childhood friend starts to appear. Like a number of other romantic visual novels on the Dreamcast, Mizuiro started off as a significantly more explicit PC game before being made notably less extreme for consoles. ■

FACT

The first release of the PC version had a massive bug which could wipe your hard drive if you tried to uninstall it. Which should probably be standard procedure for games like this, to be fair.

MOEKAN: MOEKKO COMPANY

Year 2003
Publisher Princess Soft
Developer Princess Soft

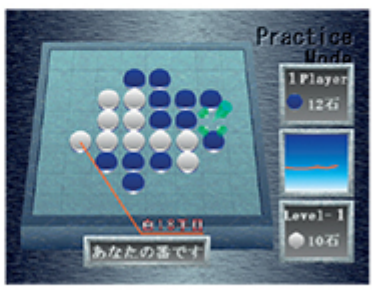
MOEKKAO ISLAND IS a secluded place where the AC Company makes android maids trained for combat. In this visual novel, you play as Takahiro Kanzai, who lives in a large mansion on the island and is paid by the AC Company to train the maids. One day Rinia arrives on the island: she's a prototype robot who looks like a young girl (because of course she does). Eager to seem helpful, Rinia does her best to impress Takahiro but ends up accidentally causing a lot of trouble around the mansion. Takahiro is initially annoyed at Rinia, but if you don't think he's eventually charmed by her clumsiness and starts taking a liking to her then you haven't been paying attention while reading this book. ■

FACT

If the plot interests you, there was a three-part anime released in 2003. While the PC version had explicit scenes, the anime is like the console versions in that it doesn't.

MORITA NO SAIKYOU REVERSI

Year 1999
Publisher Random House
Developer Random House



ALTHOUGH PUBLISHER AND developer Random House's founder Kazuo Morita would become best known as the programmer of a series of successful and award-winning shogi games, in the early days of his career he was actually more interested in Othello, otherwise known as Reversi. The guy was no slouch when it came to Reversi games too, then, and this Dreamcast take on it is a shining example. The game's Challenge mode, in which you get to play against the game's AI on its highest difficulty level, is said to be obscenely hard to beat, and it only gets better: the more you play against it, the more it learns your techniques and the stronger it becomes. ■

FACT

Morita's first success came in 1982 after his PC-8001 Reversi game, Morita Othello, beat out other programs' AIs in a Micro Othello League contest and was subsequently published.

MORITA NO SAIKYOU SHOGI

Year 1999
Publisher Random House
Developer Random House

REVERSI MAY HAVE been where Kazuo Morita first got his reputation as a master programmer, but it wasn't until he turned his attention to shogi in 1985 – and made a program that finished in the top 3 in the first six computer shogi championships – that he really made a name for himself. The title of this Dreamcast version translates to Morita's Strongest Shogi and, like the Reversi game, prides itself on its exceptionally difficult AI. Running the latest version of the 'Morita Thinking' system, the game can offer a challenge to even the greatest shogi players. It also has a powerful tsume-shogi solution algorithm, meaning you can feed it shogi puzzles and it'll solve them quicker than a wink. ■

FACT

In 1986, Morita selflessly published a book about shogi AIs which contained the source code for his own software, a move credited with inspiring future shogi developers to share their own work too.

MOTTO PRO YAKYUU TEAM WO TSUKUROU!

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Smilebit

FOOTBALL WASN'T THE only sport Sega covered in its Tsukurou (Let's Make) series. It started a baseball version on the Saturn, and this Dreamcast sequel – the title translates to Let's Make More Pro Baseball Teams – was the fifth in what would become more than 15 baseball management games (wait until you get to the 'Pro Yakyuu' bit in a few pages). The game's aim is to choose one of 12 real-life baseball teams and train them up to become world-beaters. Well, Japan-beaters, at least. You'll be the world beater, because once you're good enough you get to manage the Japanese national baseball team and can take part in the World Championships. ■

FACT

The game lets you email your team data to a friend so they can download it to their VMU, load their own copy of the game and pit their team against yours.

MUSAPEY'S CHOCO MARKER

Year	2002
Publisher	Ecole
Developer	Ecole

HERE'S A PUZZLE game plot I guarantee you haven't found in any other game. Musapey and Musappa are flying squirrel spirit brothers who live in a shrine. Noticing a decline in money and offerings from shrine visitors, they decide to visit their god to get the visitors' wishes granted. However, since only those with superior intellect can meet their god, they have to… yup, you guessed it: clear a bunch of coloured chocolate blocks. The game takes place in a 3D space, meaning gravity comes into play, and you can only make blocks disappear by sandwiching a block of one colour between two matching blocks of another colour. By using advanced techniques like sliding and splitting you can clear more blocks at once. ■

FACT

The Japanese giant flying squirrel is known as the musasabi (hence the characters' names), and can be seen gliding from tree to tree at night in some parts of Japan.

MY MERRY MAY

Year	2002
Publisher	Kid
Developer	Kid

IF YOU'VE BEEN reading through this section in order you'll have already seen a couple of visual novels that involve building an android girl and teaching her how to behave like a human, and My Merry May is another of these. You play as Kyosuke, a student at a boarding school who one day receives a large parcel from his dad and brother in America. It contains Reu, an AI humanoid designed to act like a real girl. Kyosuke starts her activation process, but a lightning strike cuts the power and Reu ends up having the mind of an infant. It's therefore now up to Kyosuke to teach Reu how to behave like the teenager she appears to be. ■

FACT

The game included the ability to connect to the internet and download new storylines to a VMU. These used the existing images on the disc, to save on storage.

MY MERRY MAYBE

Year	2003
Publisher	Kid
Developer	Kid

THIS SEQUEL TO My Merry May takes place more than 40 years later, where AI technology has advanced greatly and humanoids are working in various different parts of the world. You play as Hiroto Kishimori, a university student who's driving at night and and encounters a mysterious girl wandering the streets. When the girl collapses, Hiroto takes her to a nearby clinic, where the next day it's revealed she's a humanoid called Reu, who doesn't remember who her owner is and how she got there. Realising that Reu has feelings, unlike most humanoids, Hiroto agrees to take care of her until her owner can be found. A compilation including both games, named My Merry May With Be, was later released on PS2 and PSP.

FACT

There were no plans to make a sequel to My Merry May until fans reacted negatively to its ending. A week after release, work on My Merry Maybe began.

NAKORURU: ANOHITO KARA NO OKURIMONO

Year	2002
Publisher	Kool Kizz
Developer	Kool Kizz

THIS VISUAL NOVEL is a spin-off of SNK's Samurai Shodown series of fighting games and focuses on one of its more popular female characters, Nakoruru. Set between the events of Samurai Shodown and Samurai Shodown II, it follows Nakoruru and her friends as they return to her village of Kamui Kotan after taking part in the first event. Rather than playing as Nakoruru herself, the game instead puts you in the very small shoes of Mikato, a 7-year-old villager who idolises her and tags along for the journey. An evil force invades their village, turning tame animals into angry beasts, so it's up to Nakoruru to save the day. The visual novel sections are broken up with quizzes and button-mashing mini-games. ■

FACT

The PC version had a huge bug where you could save but couldn't load. Because failing a mini-game meant Game Over, this meant even if you saved your game you had one chance at success.

NANATSU NO HIKAN: SENRITSU NO BISHOU

Year	2000
Publisher	Koei
Developer	Koei

NANATSU NO HIKAN was a survival horror game released on the PlayStation and Saturn in 1996, and this sequel offers similar spookery. Translated as The Seven Secret Houses: The Terrifying Smile, the game follows Kei and Reina, two friends who are looking for their friend Ernest on a mysterious island filled with houses (guess how many). Naturally, these houses are crawling with creepies, so the aim is to find Ernest and get the hell out of there. The game is more flexible than most survival horror titles: as well as offering first-person, third-person and fixed camera viewpoints, you can also choose to play as either character (each with their own story) or even play a separate co-op story. ■

FACT

US releases were planned for both the first game (as Mystery of the Seven Mansions) and this sequel (as Seven Mansions: The Uncanny Grimace), but neither happened.

NAPPLE TALE: ARSIA IN DAYDREAM

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Chime

THIS 2.5D PLATFORMER tells the story of Poach Arsia, a girl who's slightly inconvenienced when a novice spirit guide called Straynap accidentally sends her to Napple World, a land of daydreams nestled between the worlds of the awake and the asleep. Upon arriving in Napple World, Poach emits six little fairies called Petals, which fly off to different parts of the world. Aided by the sheepish Straynap, Poach has to find the Petals so she can go home again. While the platforming stages in Napple Tale mean that for the most part the game can be enjoyed by non-Japanese players, there's also a hub world where you help Napple World citizens out with problems, and that can pose a language barrier. ■

FACT

Sega's promotional blurb for the game made it clear that most of the key development staff were women, something unusual in Japan (and the world, let's face it).

NEO GOLDEN LOGRES

Year	2000
Publisher	Success
Developer	LittleWing

PRO PINBALL TRILOGY may have been the only Dreamcast pinball game released in the west, but Japan was home to another game that may have appealed to fans of the old flipper-flap (a phrase I definitely didn't just make up). It consists of three separate tables – Camelot, Land's End and Fisher King – but they all share the same fantasy theme (indeed, when the game was originally released on PC you had to hit certain goals in Camelot before you could unlock the other two). With so few pinball options on the Dreamcast it could be argued that beggars can't be choosers, but it could also be argued that with no ability to zoom in the camera, the tables are rather hard to see. ■

FACT

If you really must play this and you live in Europe and own a PlayStation, save yourself a lot of money and buy Pinball Power on eBay for a couple of quid: it's the same game.

NEPPACHI I – VI

Year	1999-2001
Publisher	Daikoku Denki
Developer	Falcon

THESE SIX SEPARATE titles work similarly to the other @VPACHI games found elsewhere in this section of the book: they're recreations of real-life gambling machines, which also allowed players to submit their results online to potentially win actual real-life prizes (a feature which is obviously no longer available). The Neppachi series focused entirely on pachinko machines, and across the six volumes you'll find such delights as the horror-themed CR Monster House, the manga-licensed Ah! Hanano Ouendan 3 and… um, Monster House again (which was in both Volume I and V because fans demanded more tournaments). As well as accurately recreating each machine, players could often tinker with them by moving the pins and the like (though not for online tournaments, of course). ■

FACT

Although pachinko isn't as popular as it once was, there were still around 2.5 million active pachinko machines in Japan by the end of 2019.

NET DE PARA

Year 2000
Publisher Takuyo
Developer FortyFive

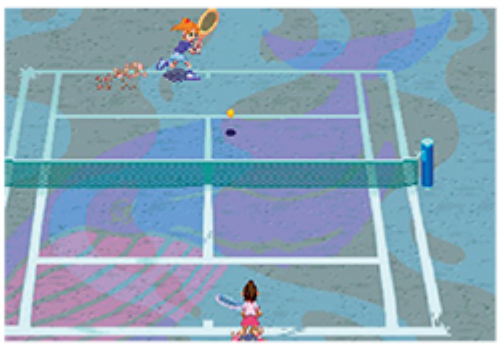
THIS CURIOUS LITTLE game is part board game, part visual novel. You play as Koji Tachibana, who's in his last year of high school and is trying to partner up with a girl before he graduates. For the most part it's a typical board game situation, where you roll a dice to travel along the squares. There are six possible girls to fall in love with, and they're all on the board too: the aim is to land on the same square as them, which is where the visual novel aspect kicks in and you get to chat to them for a while to increase your likeability. Along the way you can collect gifts to give to girls, to speed up the process. ■

FACT

The original PC version was called Nekopara. The name change refers to the fact that the Dreamcast version can be played online (i.e. on the 'Net').

NET DE TENNIS

Year 2000
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom



THIS RATHER CHARMING little tennis game was released by Capcom at a budget price of ¥1,980 (around $15). This low price may have been because it's technically only a third of a game: it's based on Capcom Sports Club, a 3-in-1 arcade machine which consisted of tennis, football and basketball games, though obviously in this case you're only getting the tennis one. Still, as you may have figured out by the title (which may or may not also be a lovely little pun), Net de Tennis does at least add online multiplayer, something the arcade version didn't feature. Another new feature not present in the coin-op is the ability to create your own character. ■

FACT

Capcom Sports Club (and therefore the offline version of Net de Tennis) is included as part of Capcom Arcade 2nd Stadium on PC, Switch, Xbox One and PS4.

NET VERSUS SERIES

Year 2001
Publisher Atmark
Developer Yuki Enterprise

ON 24 MAY 2001, Japanese publisher Atmark released seven separate games all under one brand, Net Versus. As the name implies, the idea was that each of the games offered online multiplayer, with the extra incentive being their low cost of ¥1,900 each (around $14). The seven games available were Chess (the only chess game on Dreamcast, incidentally), Hanafuda, Igo (aka Go), Mahjong, Reversi (aka Othello), Shogi and a seventh offering featuring both Gomoku and Renju (a variant of the same game). Players had to pay a subscription fee to access the online services, but if you weren't up for all that dial-up malarkey you could still play local multiplayer with a friend offline. ■

FACT

Even if you're playing offline, the game still requires you to have a VMU with enough space on it. Take it from someone who found out the hard way.

NETTO GOLF

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Data East

THERE ARE A decent helping of golf games to choose from on the Dreamcast, but Netto Golf distinguishes itself from the rest of the pack thanks to its anime-style cartoon graphics. This is no surprise given that the characters were designed by Motoo Abiko, one half of manga duo Fujiko Fujio. The game also has a unique control system that greatly differs from the three-press controls most golf titles used: after setting your aim you simply hold the stick back then let go at the right time, almost as if you were flicking the ball forwards. Naturally, given its name, one of the main selling points of Netto Golf is the ability to play online. ■

FACT

The game's final hidden character is Segata Sanshiro, the legendary character used to promote the Saturn in Japanese ads. Instead of using a golf club he just punts the balls.

NEVER7: THE END OF INFINITY

Year	2000
Publisher	Kid
Developer	Kid

THE PREDECESSOR TO Ever17 (found earlier in this book), Never7 tells the story of Makoto Ishihara, a college student who never attends any of his classes. As a punishment, Makoto and three similarly rubbish students are sent to a seminar camp on an island, where they befriend a few other islanders.

For the most part the game plays out like a standard visual novel, but on the sixth day of the story one of the girls on the island is found dead. The story then returns back to day one, and you have to relive everything again, Groundhog Day style, using what you learned last time to make different choices and try to change what happens to stop the death taking place. ■

FACT

While playing the game, the VMU's display shows you a little meter which lets you see how well you're winning over the female characters you're talking to.

NIJYUEI

Year	2002
Publisher	Princess Soft
Developer	Princess Soft

THIS HISTORICAL VISUAL novel is set in the year 1640 and puts you in the role of a swordsman who calls himself Futakage Sougen (though it isn't his real name). Sougen has two shadows (the game's title loosely translates to Double Shadow), and because of this he's generally despised by people he meets. In an attempt to find out more about his condition, Sougen heads to a place called Awashima, which has its own curse: people are always born there as twins, and one twin is always separated from the other. But there are two twins there, Il and Sui, who have remained together. The point of the game is to figure out their mystery, as well as Sougen's. ■

FACT

In 1640 in real life, a Spanish ship of 61 people arrived at Nagasaki: they were all killed and their heads were stuck on poles. And you thought having two shadows was annoying.

NIPPON PRO MAHJONG RENMEI KOUNIN: TETSUMAN MENKYOKAIDEN

Year	1999
Publisher	Naxat Soft
Developer	Naxat Soft

WHAT THIS LENGTHY title means is that the mahjong action found within is officially approved by the Japan Professional Mahjong League. This means you can play mahjong against AI versions of 16 of the country's best mahjong players including Takeo Kojima and Asataro Nada. That's right, they got Nada in there. By taking part in the monthly online tournaments, players can attempt to win real prize money; what's more, by doing well in these tournaments players can take the official JPML Dan certification exam and, if they pass it, can be given a genuine first-dan or second-dan mahjong licence. Now you can tell Nada to watch his back, and have it be about mahjong for once. ■

FACT

Asataro Nada actually got his own Game Boy game, titled Asataro Nada's Powerful Mahjong, so the guy's the real deal.

NISHIKAZE NO KYOUSHIKYOUKU

Year	2001
Publisher	SoftMax
Developer	SoftMax

ALSO KNOWN AS The Rhapsody of Zephyr, this tactical RPG was developed by Korean studio Softmax and was originally released on PC, where it was successful enough to warrant console ports. Based loosely on The Count of Monte Cristo, the game is a spin-off of Softmax's series The War of Genesis, and is set in Antaria, where the Geysir Empire has fallen into disarray. Combat is a mix between the usual turn-based grid format seen in tactical RPGs and the time gauge system seen in Final Fantasy VII, and there are some interesting quirks in there like the ability to break weapons by blocking them, and the fact that units with guns have limited ammo. ■

FACT

The game sold 80,000 copies in South Korea, which was considered a success at a time when, according to SoftMax, 5,000 sales in Korea was considered a 'hit'.

NOBUNAGA NO YABOU: REPPUUDEN

Year	1999
Publisher	Koei
Developer	Koei

THE NOBUNAGA'S AMBITION series started in 1983, and by the time it came to the Dreamcast it had reached its eighth volume (well, sort of: look to the right). As with the rest of the series, Reppuuden is a turn-based 'grand strategy' game in which you have to achieve warlord Oda Nobunaga's dream, to completely take over and unifty Japan. The game features a series of historical scenarios covering the mid-1500s, from the Okehazama Battle in 1560, to the Siege of Kanegasaki in 1570, to the Honnoji Incident in 1582. The main new features in this entry were battlefields that changed in size depending on the scale of the battle, and a prestige rating that determines how well you do with diplomacy and recruiting. ■

FACT

Reppuuden was ported to the PSP in 2009, with reduced opponent thinking times and shorter loading times.

NOBUNAGA NO YABOU: SHOUSEIROKU WITH POWER-UP KIT

Year	1999
Publisher	Koei
Developer	Koei

NINE MONTHS BEFORE Reppuuden was released, Koei ported over the seventh game in the series to keep Dreamcast owners busy while they waited for the latest offering. Originally released on the Saturn and PlayStation, Shouseiroku introduced a new map screen in which the map of Japan was replaced with a large tactical grid. In order to give those who had previously bought the game a reason to get it again, the Dreamcast version added the 'Power-Up Kit', which increased the number of scenarios from five to ten. So if you ever wanted to recreate the entry into Kiosu in April 1555 or the Battle of Komaki and Nagakute in 1584 (and why wouldn't you, frankly), this dream could finally be realised. ■

FACT

The Battle of Komaki and Nagakute was won by Tokugawa Ieyasu after his army defeated that of Hashiba Hideyoshi. Both had previously served Nobunaga.

O-TO-I-RE: DREAMCAST SEQUENCER

Year	1999
Publisher	Waka
Developer	Waka

IF YOU'RE THE musical type, this could be an interesting little piece of software for you: and best of all, it's presented almost entirely in English. As the title gives away, O.to.i.Re is a music sequencer in which you choose from a selection of musical 'phrases' (short samples) and place them in a grid to make decent music fairly easily. There are over 4,000 phrases in the game, and if you somehow manage to exhaust all of those the game also supports the Dreamcast MIDI Interface Cable, an official adaptor that only worked with O.to.i.Re and let you attach a keyboard to your console so you could create your own melodies instead of having to use the preset ones. ■

FACT

Developer Waka was working on another Dreamcast music game called VJ Monster. Very little is known about it, and it was never released.

OGAMI ICHIRO FUNTOUKI: SAKURA TAISEN KAYOU SHOW BENITOKAGE YORI

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Red Company

BENITOKAGE (RED LIZARD) was a real-life stage show based on the Sakura Taisen visual novels (found later in this book). This game is a sort of companion to the show, in which you play as Ichiro, a chap who helps the cast behind the scenes. There are a handful of mini-games in which you have to hand out leaflets and the like, interspersed with video footage from the show. There's also a short adventure in which the lead, Sumire Kanzaki, injures her leg and it's not clear if the show will go on. Which has to be the only instance of a game based on a stage show based on a game. ■

FACT

Other mini-games include kicking out customers with counterfeit tickets, and having an air-hockey style contest in a bathroom by trying to hit soap into an opponent's bucket.

OMOIDE NI KAWARU KIMI: MEMORIES OFF

Year	2002
Publisher	Kid
Developer	Kid

THIS IS THE third game in the Memories Off series of visual novels (you can find the first two earlier in this section). This time you play as Shougo Kagaya, a first year university student who's a tad on the lazy side: instead of studying hard he prefers to hang out at the local coffee shop, Cubic Cafe. A number of years earlier Shougo used to date a girl called Kanata, but one day she left him without warning and disappeared without a trace. One day, Kanata turns up at Cubic Cafe and the two find themselves in each other's lives again. Although the game plays much like its predecessors, players reacted negatively to the characters being university students instead of high schoolers. ■

FACT

The characters were made slightly older to match the fanbase. However, it turned out most had moved on, and the series had since gained new young fans who disliked the change.

ORANGE POCKET

Year	2004
Publisher	Pione Soft
Developer	Pione Soft

YET ANOTHER ROMANCE visual novel that was originally released on PC in an explicit 18+ rated version before coming to Dreamcast in a heavily sanitised state. You play as Hideaki Eda, a high school student who lives in a peaceful, rural area of Japan. One day, Hideaki's childhood friend Nazuna returns from her life in the city and transfers to his school: I smell chemistry, and I don't just mean science class. The game boasts an interesting feature roughly translated as 'real-time clicking', in which it isn't just the responses you give which affect how a girl reacts to you, but how quickly (or slowly) you decide to respond too. Finally: a game where awkward silences are a tactic, not a turn-off. ■

FACT

To make up for all the missing smut, the Dreamcast version adds a new girl called Korone, who's the daughter of a baker and is generally terrified of men.

OUKA HOUSHIN: OUKA SAKI SHI TOKI

Year	1999
Publisher	MediaWorks, ESP
Developer	MediaWorks, ESP

THIS DREAMCAST-EXCLUSIVE TACTICAL RPG is based on a physical tabletop RPG from the '90s, which in turn was based on a 16th century Chinese novel called Fengshen Yanyi (Investiture of the Gods). It's set in Ohka, a fantasy world with more than a hint of ancient China to it, and tells the story of Reihoshi Akira, a girl with a destiny. After being told by her hermit master of a strange presence in Ohka, she heads out to investigate, and finds herself in a conflict between the Dragon Masters (who are tasked with protecting the Dragon Egg, which keeps water flowing in the land) and the Evil Immortals (who want to steal said egg). ■

FACT

Fengshen Yanyi also inspired a number of other games developed by Koei. Its story was the basis for Mystic Heroes, and some of its characters appear in Warriors Orochi.

PACHI-SLOT TEIOU: DREAM SLOT – HEIWA SP

Year	2001
Publisher	Media Entertainment
Developer	Media Entertainment

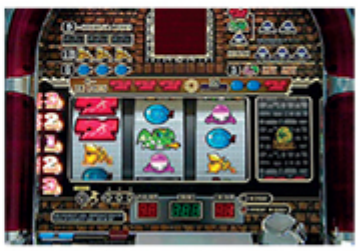
HEIWA WAS – AND hey, who am I kidding, still is – one of the world's biggest manufacturers of pachinko machines in the world. Not that this matters too much in this instance, because what's on offer here is instead three Heiwa slot machines, not pachinko. There are three realistic recreations to choose from on this disc: CR Lupin III (a 2000 slot machine based on the anime based on the manga), CR Oedo Sakurafubuki (a 2000 machine based on cherry blossoms) and CR Spring Exhaust (a 2001 machine with a motorbike theme). Each comes with a Lecture mode which teaches you how to play, and a Challenge mode, which judges your technique. If a slot machine has a technique. ■

FACT

Legally, Japanese pachislot machines must have three reels, have a button that lets players stop them, and spin no faster than 80rpm. So there is actually some skill involved.

PACHI-SLOT TEIOU: DREAM SLOT – OLYMPIA SP

Year 2001
Publisher Media Entertainment
Developer Media Entertainment



I KNOW WHAT you're thinking, Olympia pachislot fans. 'First Heiwa acquired us in 1998 and turned us into a subsidiary, and now it has its own Dreamcast collection? Where's ours?' Fret not! Just two months later this second collection was released, containing three recently popular Olympia slot machines. On offer here are CR Beat the Dragon (a fantasy-themed machine), CR Ice Story (which is ice-themed, you'll be rocked to discover) and the racing-themed CR Hot Rod Queen. As with its Heiwa-themed companion, the game contains a code which lets you enter 30 online competitions, with the chance of winning real-life prizes. And to think, you thought your die-hard love of Olympia slot machines had no possible pay-off. ■

FACT

Pachinko was actually inspired by the Corinthian bagatelle, an American table game. Early pachinko machines in the 1920s were named 'korinto gemu' (Corinth game).

PACHINKO NO DENDOU: CR NANASY

Year 2001
Publisher Micro Cabin
Developer Micro Cabin

ALTHOUGH TO IGNORANT people pachinko machines may all look the same, to devotees they're like pinball in that you have good and bad designs. Nanasy, which was released in 1996, is considered one of the greatest machines ever, and CR Nanasy is its sequel. Such heraldry among pachinko fans deserves recognition, which is why this game was released (the first part of the title translates to Pachinko Hall of Fame). This is a complete 3D recreation of the CR Nanasy machine, right down to the positioning of each individual nail: the developer worked with the machine's manufacturer Toyomaru Sangyo to make sure all internal parameters were reproduced accurately. Except for the whole 'winning prizes' bit, naturally. ■

FACT

Most modern pachinko machines have CR in their title. It was introduced to show which machines had a card reader (instead of just a coin slot), and the name stuck.

PANDORA NO YUME

Year 2002
Publisher NEC interchannel
Developer Pajamas Soft

DURING A SUMMER holiday training camp, a group of arts club members discover Suu, a 'nursing robot' who's brought to life and decides that Yuito, the protagonist, is her new master. Yuito then spends a wonderful seven days with Suu and his pals, after which a massive earthquake occurs and everyone is whisked back to the start of the week, where they discover Suu all over again. As this Groundhog Day scenario continues, what was once a cheery adventure becomes progressively darker. The Dreamcast version naturally lacks all the explicit content of the earlier PC release it's based on, but to at least make the gameplay more engaging the PC version's single-storyline plot has been turned into one with multiple routes. ■

FACT

A special edition limited to 5,000 copies includes a framed illustration of Suu, and a little easel with a small canvas painting of her.

PANZER FRONT

Year 1999
Publisher ASCII
Developer Shangri-La

PANZER FRONT IS a tank simulation game set in World War II, and when I say 'simulation' I mean it. Far from an arcade-style blast 'em up, the six fictional tanks in this game perform much like the real-life tanks of the era, with the player expected to get used to their extremely slow but powerful movement. The game has around 25 missions, some of which recreate moments from WWII but, somewhat controversially, these are split into American, Russian and German missions. This means that for around a third of the game you're playing as the Nazis and often trying to rewrite history: for example, trying to prevent the Allies taking over Hill 112 in northern France. ■

FACT

Panzer Front was released on the PlayStation in North America and Europe and can be found cheap, so if you're looking for an English language version that's where to go.

PATISSERIE NA NYANKO

Year 2004
Publisher Pione Soft
Developer Pione Soft

AS THIS BOOK makes abundantly clear, there are countless visual novels set in high schools. But how about one set in a cake shop? Does that sound a 'trifle' more interesting? Shoichi Yaguchi is a school student who returns to his hometown to take over the family cake shop after his dad injures his back. While the game does have the typical romance elements, there's also a separate side-story involving a cat wizard. Yes, a cat wizard. Accusing Shoichi of mistreating cats, the wizard casts a spell that turns Shoichi into a cat every night. If he can't break the spell within a month he will remain a cat forever. Which must be a real pain (au chocolat). ■

FACT

The limited edition version, which includes an audio CD and artbook, looks almost identical to the standard edition. The only difference is a small pink oval on the left side of the cover.

PIA CARROT E YOUKOSO!! 2

Year 2003
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Cocktail Soft

THE FIRST PIA Carrot game was released on PC before being ported to the Saturn with the nudity removed. This sequel also came to the Saturn first, but was then brought to the Dreamcast a few years down the line. Like the other games in the series, it's set in a fictional chain of restaurants called Pia Carrot, and this particular entry has you playing as Koji Maeda, a waiter at one of the restaurant branches. Yusuke, the manager from the first game, has moved to this new branch and as such is the only returning character. The plot mainly consists of general hijinks in which you chat up the waitresses to try and build relationships with them. ■

FACT

A real-life cosplay restaurant named Pia Carrot was opened in Akihabara in July 1999. It was only supposed to last a few months but was popular enough to stick around until April 2000.

PIA CARROT E YOUKOSO!! 2.5

Year 2001
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Cocktail Soft

HERE'S WHERE IT gets confusing. After the second Pia Carrot was released in the late '90s, a Game Boy Color sequel called Pia Carrot e Youkoso 2.2 was released. This was a sequel which took place after the events of the second game, and assumed that Koji didn't end up with any specific girl in that story. In 2001, the Dreamcast got this version 2.5 release, which consists of two discs. The first disc contained Part 2 (which you just read about, because that was a later standalone re-release), and the second contained a new port of 2.2. So just to be clear, 2.5 was released first (containing 2 and 2.2), then 2 was released on its own. Yes, I know. ■

FACT

The Pia Carrot series got two separate three-episode adult animes, a six-episode all-ages one and a 50-minute anime movie.

PIA CARROT E YOUKOSO!! 3

Year 2003
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer NEC Interchannel

DRAWING A LINE under the Pia Carrot series (on the Dreamcast at least), the third game is set in a new Pia Carrot restaurant located in a small coastal town called Misaki Kaigan (which is based on the the real-life beach area Miura Kaigan in the Kanagawa prefecture). This time you're playing as Akihiko Kannazuki, who's working part-time at Pia Carrot for a month during his summer vacation. Cue another batch of waitresses to flirt with, albeit with the added twist that this time one of the chefs is your sister. As in other games in the series, the aim isn't just to improve your relationship with the girls you talk to, but to also improve the protagonist's life by keeping him healthy and well-groomed. ■

FACT

Just to confuse things even further, the Game Boy Advance got a sequel called Pia Carrot e Youkoso 3.3.

PIZZICATO POLKA: SUISEI GENYA

Year	2004
Publisher	Kid
Developer	Kid

IN THIS VISUAL novel, Japanese student Tatsuya Tsuzumi has travelled to Hexenburg, a small tourist town located near the bottom of the Alps. Although he's there to study folklore, Tatsuya has another reason to be in Hexenburg. He's looking for Shizuka, his fellow student: she travelled there a few months ago and has since gone missing. As he explores the town in search of his friend, Tatsuya befriends a group of girls (because of course he does) and in between all the usual romance stuff he also hears stories of a serial killer targeting young women in the town. Can he find Shizuka, and can he do it without being distracted by ladies? (Answers: not telling, and no) ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version added a new storyline not featured on PC, created by noted romance visual novel writer Romeo Tanaka. Not his real name, you won't be surprised to hear.

PLUS PLUM

Year	1999
Publisher	Takuyo
Developer	Takuyo

THIS PUZZLE GAME is your typical arcade style puzzler in which you have to move coloured balls as they slowly fall down a well, in an attempt to line up three balls of the same colour and make them disappear. The main twist here is that the playing field is sitting on top of a large scale, which is being weighed down by the balls: each ball colour has its own weight, and if your scale is weighed down to a certain level you lose. By pulling off combos you can increase the weight of your opponent's balls (stop chuckling), meaning the longer a contest goes the fewer balls need to be on the scale before losing becomes a real threat. ■

FACT

Plus Plum got a sequel called Plus Plum 2, which is rare because it was only released on the Xbox in Japan. It was then ported to the PSP as Plus Plum 2 Again.

POCKE-KANO: YUMI, SHUZIKA, FUMIO

Year	2000
Publisher	Datam Polystar
Developer	Success

IMAGINE A VIRTUAL pet game where the pet is actually a young girl. That was the slightly concerning concept behind Pocke-Kano, a trio of games originally released on the PlayStation. This Dreamcast compilation gathers all three, giving you three different 11-year-olds to choose from. After befriending them you can then save their data to the VMU, which is where the virtual pet aspect comes into play: you can play little mini-games with them to build their stats then upload the data back into the game. For each day you play in real-time the girl grows a year older until she turns 18, so it is actually a 'girl-raising' game rather than anything dodgy. Well, dodgier. ■

FACT

The Pocke-Kano name is based on the PocketStation, the VMU-like PlayStation memory card that the series was originally designed for.

POP'N MUSIC

Year	1999
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami

POP'N MUSIC WAS a very popular series of rhythm arcade games which formed part of Konami's Bemani brand (named after its first big rhythm game Beatmania). Rather than simulating a specific instrument, Pop'n Music is instead played with a big slab with nine colourful round buttons on it. As colours travel down the screen and pass a line, you have to press the corresponding button to play the note. It's a very simple system, but it allows the game to scale wildly in difficulty depending on the player's skill level. While the game can be played with a standard Dreamcast controller, it's best played with the Pop'n Controller, a Dreamcast mini replica of the 9-button arcade layout. ■

FACT

At the time off writing there have been nearly 30 Pop'n Music arcade games.

POP'N MUSIC 2

Year 1999
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

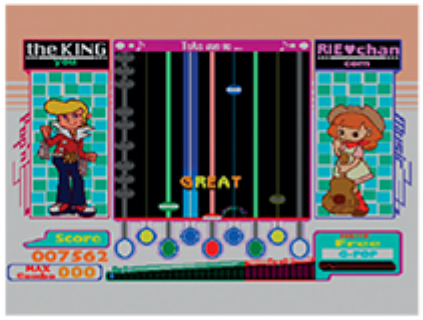
THE SEQUEL TO Pop'n Music builds on its predecessor by offering even more content. In fact, it carries over all 19 songs from the first Dreamcast version and adds another 27 on top of that, bringing the total track list to 46 and essentially making the first game obsolete. What's more, if you were a champ at the arcade version of Pop'n Music 2 this was still worth a look, because 13 of these new songs were exclusive to the console version of the game. Perhaps to ensure that Pop'n Music 2 wouldn't be replaced like the first game was, Konami also made the game a 'key disc', meaning future games in the series would require Pop'n Music 2 to work. ■

FACT

Pop'n Music 2 includes a VMU mini-game version called Pop'n Music Anywhere, which is an extremely basic recreation of the same gameplay.

POP'N MUSIC 3 APPEND DISC

Year 2000
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami



AS PROMISED, THE third Pop'n Music game on Dreamcast wasn't a standalone title, but was instead an 'append disc' which required Pop'n Music 2 to play. Pop'n Music 3 has a total of 44 songs, but some of these were already in the second game players owned (which wouldn't have been a problem for the arcade version, of course). Of the songs available, 27 are new, and nine of these are new to the console version of the game. As well as the new tracks, the third game adds a new mode called Hyper, in which you play through courses consisting of a number of songs in a row. You start with a full 'groove gauge', which is depleted as you make mistakes. ■

FACT

Because playing a 9-button game with a standard Dreamcast controller is quite fiddly, all four games offer 5-button and 7-button modes in the Options menu.

POP'N MUSIC 4 APPEND DISC

Year 2000
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

ONCE AGAIN, POP'N Music 4 required the second game in order to work, but this time it didn't use half the songs players already owned as filler. Instead, of the 41 songs making up the game's track list, only seven were carried over, and all of them from Pop'n Music 3. That meant 34 brand new songs, 10 of which were exclusive to the console version and weren't available in arcades. The home console versions of Pop'n Music would continue for another four entries on the PlayStation (including anime and Disney spin-off games), and a further nine on the PlayStation 2, but as far as the Dreamcast went, this was the end of the musical road. ■

FACT

In 2008, Konami attempted to bring the series to the west with digital Xbox 360 title Beat'n Groovy. It was a perfectly reasonable rhythm game, but it was just missing something.

POWER JET RACING 2001

Year 2001
Publisher CRI
Developer CRI

IF YOU'VE ALREADY read the entry on Surf Rocket Racers in the 'western games' section of this book, you'll know that Power Jet Racing 2001 is more than just the same game with a different title. Indeed, put the two games side-by-side and you'll see that despite only releasing a month after its western equivalent, Power Jet Racing 2001 is vastly superior in terms of graphical detail. Whereas Surf Rocket Racers is a little bland when it comes to the water effects, here the water has more texture to it and there are more impressive particle effects creating little splashes every time you land. Both games are perfectly fine jet ski racers, but if you have the ability to play both, pick this one. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast could have ended up with another water-based racing game. Australian studio Perception was working on Thunderboats, which got an IGN preview but was then scrapped.

PRINCESS HOLIDAY: KOROGARU RINGO TEI SENYA ICHIYA

Year 2003
Publisher Alchemist
Developer HuneX

ANOTHER VISUAL NOVEL that started off as an explicit PC release and was then tamed down for Dreamcast, Princess Holiday takes place in a medieval world, where your character – a travelling bard called Cliff Cloud – is headed back to his hometown of Symphonia Kingdom after three years. He encounters a girl who's being chased by soldiers: after rescuing her, he puts her up in his family's inn. It soon emerges the girl is the princess of Symphonia Kingdom, who had escaped the castle to see the outside world. The King agrees to let her work at the inn to prepare for her future as Queen. Oh, and obviously there are girls to romance along the way, one of whom is, horrendously, your own sister. ■

FACT

The game's official website held two polls to see who players' favourite girl was. The sister came in 2nd and 1st respectively, which is just… I don't know.

PRINCESS MAKER COLLECTION

Year 2001
Publisher GeneX
Developer NineLives

THE PRINCESS MAKER series is a collection of bishoujo (girl games) where the player has to raise a young girl. The first game was released on the MSX, while the second and third were released on the Saturn. This Dreamcast collection consists of Princess Maker 2 and 3, with the main selling point being the ability to view the game's illustrations at a higher resolution than before. The second game is set in a fantasy medieval-like world where you play as a war hero who has to raise a girl until she turns 18 and leaves to enter the working world. The third is similar but this time you're taking care of a young fairy who dreams of becoming a human princess. ■

FACT

Princess Maker 2 has 74 possible endings, and Princess Maker 3 has 60. Good luck ticking all of those off.

PRISM HEART

Year 2001
Publisher Kid
Developer Kid

VISUAL NOVELS WHERE you try to get with women may be ten a penny, but how about one where you're trying to be a knight and get with women at the same time? The game casts you as Meistel, who lives in the kingdom of Vintland and dreams of becoming a knight. The kingdom holds a swordfighting competition every three years, and it's time for the next one, so Meistel decides to enter in an attempt to be knighted. First he has to prepare, though, so he decides to stay at the Windmill Inn on the outskirts of town to get some training in. That's where he meets (surprise surprise) a group of attractive women, whose 'friendship' grows depending on how well Meistel trains. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version adds two new characters and a second disc containing new scenarios.

PRISMATICALLIZATION

Year 2000
Publisher Arc System Works
Developer Arc System Works

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU'VE FOUND the game with the worst title in the entire book. This visual novel has you playing as Shoji Iba, a third-year high school student who's invited by his childhood friend Akemi to spend his summer holiday with her at a guest house in a summer resort. If you're expecting romantic times with Akemi, think again: although this is indeed a dating sim, Shoji ends up finding a strange prism in the forest, which causes everyone to be trapped in a Groundhog Day style 24-hour cycle, where they have to live the same day over and over again. At first they aren't aware it's happening, so your goal is to make Shoji realise what's going on then figure out how to break the cycle. ■

FACT

Luckily, while the first 'cycle' lasts around 30 minutes, you then get the option to skip any text you've already read, meaning subsequent cycles can only last a couple of minutes each.

PRO MAHJONG KIWAME D

Year 2000
Publisher Athena
Developer Athena

HOW MANY MAHJONG games do you know of with a back-of-the-box blurb that promises 'serious games with 16 famous professional mahjong players'? If the answer is none, you can now tweak that slightly. The game has a Free Rules mode which lets you tweak the rules to your own liking, a Tournament mode where you take on a pair of competitions with professional rules, and a Training mode where you can improve your mahjong skills. The latter consists of a quiz mode where you can learn about tile efficiency, and an evaluation mode where the game studies how you play then gives you data and feedback on your playing style. ■

FACT

The back of the game's box is a thing of beauty, with 16 serious-looking pro mahjong players in suits staring at you intently like they're the mahjong equivalent of the American Gladiators.

PRO YAKYUU TEAM O TSUKUROU!

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega R&D 6

FORGIVE ME FOR messing around with alphabetical order on this page, but things are going to get a lot more complicated if we don't go chronologically here. Pro Yakyuu Team o Tsukurou! (Let's Make a Pro Baseball Team!) is the second game in Sega's baseball management series, which originally started on the Saturn (and had practically the same title, confusingly). You have to choose between 12 real-life Japanese teams and take control of three different aspects: management (keeping an eye on finances and building facilities), personnel (hiring and firing staff and players) and strategy (training players, deciding batting order and swapping out pitchers). The aim, naturally, is to build the best team in Japan. ■

FACT

There have been more than 15 games in the Pro Yakyuu Team series, covering such formats as the PS2, Game Boy Advance, DS, PC and mobile.

PRO YAKYUU TEAM DE ASOBOU!

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega R&D 6

MANAGING A JAPANESE pro baseball team is all well and good, but let's face it: nobody likes sitting up in the stands and watching the game when they could be down on the field and playing it themselves. That's where Pro Yakyuu Team de Asobou! (Let's Play with a Pro Baseball Team!) comes into play. Of course, the big difference between this game and its predecessor is that this time you can actually play baseball instead of managing it. The game supports save data from Pro Yakyuu Team o Tsukurou!, meaning you can manage the team on one disc then actually take control of its players on the other disc. ■

FACT

The game lets you choose your pitches on the VMU screen, making it easier to hide your strategy while playing against another player.

PRO YAKYUU TEAM DE ASOBOU NET!

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Smilebit

I THINK YOU can probably see where I'm about to go with this one. Once Sega had released a baseball management game and a spin-off of said baseball management game that allowed you to actually play the matches, the next logical step was giving players the ability to take their team online and challenge other players across Japan. This wasn't so much an upgrade of the previous game as it was a sequel: indeed, players couldn't copy over their save data from either Pro Yakyuu Team o Tsukurou! or Asobou! because they were technically the previous entries. Instead, players had to wait a month for Motto Pro Yakyuu Team o Tsukurou!, the management sequel, and import their team from that. ■

FACT

In 2008, the DS version of Pro Yakyuu Team o Tsukurou! topped the Japanese charts. It was knocked off the top spot the following week… by another baseball game (from Konami).

PRO YAKYUU TEAM O TSUKUROU! & ASOBOU!

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Smilebit

UNTIL THIS POINT Sega had released four Let's Make games in its Dreamcast baseball series: two that let you manage the team, and two that let you actually play the games. For the third season, Sega finally saw sense and did the inevitable: it combined both games so there was no more need to buy two titles. Players could finally make and manage their own baseball team, then take to the field with them and actually play the games, without having to keep switching discs to do one or the other. And yes, you could take your team online and play against others as well, meaning this was the disc that could truly do everything, rendering the others outdated. ■

FACT

The series moved onto the PS2 after this, but ditched its cartoon art style in flavour of more realistic players.

PSYVARIAR 2: THE WILL TO FABRICATE

Year	2004
Publisher	Success
Developer	Skonec

DESPITE ITS OBJECTIVELY awful title, Psyvariar 2 is a solid port of an arcade shoot 'em up by genre veteran Success. Originally released as a coin-op in 2003 then brought to the Dreamcast a year later, this vertically scrolling schmup has you choosing between two different flying mechs and taking them through five enemy-riddled stages in search of that eternal video game aim, a high score. Every good shoot 'em up needs a gimmick, and here it's a complete lack of power-ups. Instead, you have to level up your mech by taking out enemies and building up a 'Buzz' combo, which you get by passing close to enemy bullets without being hit by them. ■

FACT

If you do well in a stage your mech will transform and you'll move on to the Hard version of the next stage. Reach the final form by the end of the game and you get a secret sixth stage.

PUYO PUYO DA!

Year	1999
Publisher	Compile
Developer	Compile

IF YOU BOUGHT Puyo Puyo Da! expecting another entry in Sega and Compile's popular puzzle series, you were in for a bit of a surprise. Although the game is indeed part of the Puyo Puyo franchise, it's actually a rhythm action spin-off based on one of Compile's other games, Broadway Legend Ellena. Gameplay is a dance battle situation, in which the CPU performs a series of moves using the D-Pad and the player then has to repeat it. If you copy the moves well enough you'll send nuisance Puyos to your opponent's screen, distracting them. It's a straightforward enough music game with a reasonable helping of J-Pop music, but just to be crystal clear again: it's not a puzzler. ■

FACT

Ellena System refers to the graphical style the game is rendered in, as well as Ellena Stevens, the star of Broadway Legend Ellena, who's playable in this game too.

PUYO PUYO FEVER

Year	2004
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sonic Team / Digi-mix

AFTER MORE THAN a decade of making Puyo Puyo games (among others), developer Compile went bankrupt in 2003. Sega, which had owned the Puyo Puyo franchise since 1998, took this as an opportunity to completely reboot the series, ditching the Compile-created characters who had been appearing in the games up to this point and introducing a new cast of colourful characters created by Sonic Team. The biggest addition to the gameplay in this sequel is the titular Fever mode, which builds as the player clears 'nuisance' Puyo off their screen. When Fever mode is triggered, the player's screen is replaced by a series of combo puzzles which can cause huge damage to the opponent if they're solved in time. ■

FACT

Puyo Puyo Fever was the last first-party Sega game to be released for the Dreamcast in Japan.

PUYO PUYO-N 4

Year 1999
Publisher Sega
Developer Compile

ALTHOUGH PUYO PUYO Fever is widely regarded as the best Puyo Puyo game on the Dreamcast, that's not to say its predecessor isn't a fun puzzle game as well. Puyo Pyuo-n 4 (the title is a pun, because 'yon' means 'four') was the first in the series to be published by Sega after it took control of the IP. The main feature introduced in this fourth entry is special attacks specific to each of the game's 18 playable characters. By building up an SP meter by performing chains you can then trigger these attacks. The game can also take place on differently sized playing fields now: while other versions of the game featured three, the Dreamcast version has a fourth super-small one. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast's unique playing field is zoomed out so far the player can potentially build up a combo chain of 108 clears, the largest chain in the history of the series.

QUIZ AA! MEGAMI-SAMA: TATAKAU TSUBASA TO TOMONI

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer WOW Entertainment

HOW WELL DO you know your Aa! Megami-sama? Did you know that's the Japanese name for the popular manga and anime series *Oh My Goddess*? If you didn't, then you're already off to a frankly awful start in this quiz game which is dedicated to all things Goddess-y. Billed as a 'quiz + adventure + dating simulation', you play as college student Keiichi Morisato and have to collect 'magic stones' by answering quiz questions presented by goddesses from the anime, then use these stones to fight a stage boss. There are around 6,000 questions in the game (compared to 5,000 in the arcade version it's ported from) and there are multiple endings. ■

FACT

By the time the game was released there had been 21 manga volumes, 53 anime episodes and a movie. So there was plenty of research to do.

RADIRGY

Year 2006
Publisher Milestone
Developer Milestone

THE SECOND GAME developed by ex-Compile shoot 'em up veterans Milestone, Radirgy was released in arcades in 2005 before arriving on the Dreamcast as a rare 2006 release. The game was notable for its cel-shaded art style (something Milestone would replicate with Karous the following year) and tells the story of Shizuku Kamigusa, a schoolgirl piloting a flying mech who's trying to rescue her scientist father from terrorists so he can finish making a cure for her allergy to radio waves. You know, that old chestnut. Although it's a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up, you're also armed with a sword and shield which can be used to deflect some bullets and even push away some power-ups, letting you juggle them until you need them. ■

FACT

There were plans to bring Radirgy to the GameCube in North America under the title Radio Allergy (so that's what it stands for!) but these plans were scrapped.

RAINBOW COTTON

Year 2000
Publisher Success
Developer Success

COTTON IS A series of mainly side-scrolling 'cute 'em ups' which started in the arcades in 1991. On occasion the series would stray from its usual viewpoint, and Rainbow Cotton (the sixth entry) was one such occasion, instead offering players a third-person on-rails shooter in the style of Panzer Dragoon. You play as the titular Cotton, a young witch who's been tasked with flying across the land on her broomstick in search of the evil demon Tweed, who's stolen a legendary Willow candy. Players can look around in 360 degrees, and Cotton can also level up her attack by collecting crystals. Her broom also has its own energy bar: if it runs out, she has to continue on foot. ■

FACT

The first five Cotton games were re-released in the 2020s for modern consoles, though (at the time off writing) Rainbow Cotton remains Dreamcast-only.

REAL SOUND: KAZE NO REGRET

Year 1999
Publisher Warp
Developer Warp

IF YOU'RE GETTING a bit tired with all the visual novels in this section, then how about the complete opposite? Originally released on the Sega Saturn in 1997, Real Sound was an audio novel which showed absolutely nothing on the screen and had the players simply listen to the story, choosing what to do at various points to change the plot. The idea was to make a game that blind and visually impaired people could play just as well as those with 20-20 vision. This Dreamcast port slightly changes that by offering an optional 'Visual mode', but it still only shows fairly random photos of landscapes while the audio plays, rather than plot-specific images. ■

FACT

Showing that it was serious about its aim, publisher Warp sent out Braille instruction manuals to any visually impaired people who wanted to try playing the game.

REDLINE RACER

Year 1999
Publisher Imagineer
Developer Criterion Software

AROUND SIX MONTHS before Suzuki Alstare Extreme Racing was released in the west, the game was first released in Japan. The thing is, though, at this point there was no Suzuki licence, so the Japanese version is instead called Redline Racer. Don't be under the impression that both games are identical in every way other than licensing, however: it turns out that the extra half a year of development worked wonders for the western release, because it's significantly superior visually. Textures are greatly improved and the UI is laid out better, and yet despite looking inferior the Japanese version's loading times are much longer. If you have the ability to play both the Japanese and western releases, go for the latter. ■

FACT

Redline Racer was also the name of the original PC release, and it looked similar to the Japanese Dreamcast version, so Suzuki Alstare is definitely the best of the bunch.

RENAI CHU! HAPPY PERFECT

Year 2003
Publisher Good Navigate
Developer Fupac

HERE'S A VISUAL novel that plays the old Mulan trick. You play as a student who attends a strict boarding school, which has single-sex dormitories and strictly forbids any fraternising between girls and boys. Your character has been chatting with a girl called Nana over email, but is aware that he can probably never meet her because of the school's rules. One day a new transfer student arrives at your dorm room and gives you a big hug. It turns out this new 'boy' is actually Nana – or Nanami, to give her full name – pretending to be her twin brother and disguising herself as a boy so she can see you. A good thing, or a disaster waiting to happen? You decide (obviously). ■

FACT

The game comes with a bonus 'fun disc' CD-ROM containing music, wallpapers, and a couple of music videos.

RENT-A-HERO NO 1

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Aspect

THIS IS A remake of Rent-a-Hero, a comedy RPG originally released on the Mega Drive in Japan. You play as Taro Yamada, a young man who strives to clean up Japan's streets by renting out a superhero costume and using its armour and weaponry to defeat bad guys. Starting out in his home town of Koja, Taro can eventually take the train to nine other areas and do his heroic deeds there too. While the Mega Drive original was obviously a sprite-based RPG, here the action is fully polygonal and the game uses the same engine as Sega's arcade beat 'em up SpikeOut to control its combat. Sadly, the west missed out on getting to experience its typically Sega sense of humour. ■

FACT

The names of the 10 train stations you can travel to are all puns based on the train stations located around Sega's (then) Japanese headquarters near Otorii Station.

REVIVE... SOSEI

Year 1999
Publisher Data East
Developer Sakata SAS

THIS VISUAL NOVEL is part romance, part escape game. When Kiharu gets a letter saying her presumed dead mother is actually alive, she heads to the Ocean Development Research Institute in search of her. As Kiharu's brother-in-law Minoru, you follow after her to see what's going on. Turns out what's going on is some sort of elaborate ruse in which Minoru, Kiharu and a bunch of attractive girls have been trapped in this underwater laboratory and now have to find a way out. The game uses what it calls the Trap Divergent Story system, in which the story branches depending on which items and methods you use to escape each trap. There are over 20 endings to be found. ■

FACT

The game is the sequel to Saturn game Doukoko Soshite, which had a similar set-up in which a group of bus passengers find themselves trapped in an abandoned house.

ROOMMANIA #203

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

IN A WAY, Roommania #203 is a virtual pet game like Seaman but this time your 'pet' is 100 per cent human. Playing as God (that's right), you have to intervene in the life of Neji Taihei, a student living in Japan who's making nothing of himself and is on the path to loserdom. You do this the way all gods do: by flinging ping-pong balls around the room to get Neji's attention and show him what he should be looking at. Occasionally he'll leave his room and head out, at which point you can have a sneaky read of his diary and listen to the radio, which plays music from other Sega games like Panzer Dragoon Saga and Burning Rangers. ■

FACT

A PS2 sequel called New Roommania: Porori Seishun was released in 2003, and has you looking after both Neji and a new female roommate called Kakato.

ROOMMATE ASAMI: OKU-SAMA WA JOSHI KOUSEI DIRECTOR'S EDITION

Year 2002
Publisher Datam Polystar
Developer Fupac

THIS VISUAL NOVEL is based on the manga series *Oku-sama wa Joshi Kousei*, which roughly translates to My Wife is a High School Girl. Yes, you read that right. You play as Kyosuke Ichimaru, a physics teacher who has just married his 17-year-old student Asami. Asami's dad forbids them to be intimate until after she graduates (yes, because that's the problem) and the pair have to keep their marriage a secret because it turns out, amazingly, that a teacher marrying a student is actually frowned upon in some places. So, yes, that's what this one is. Thankfully this isn't one of the many Dreamcast visual novels that began life as an explicit adults-only PC version. ■

FACT

When the Dreamcast's internal clock states that it's Christmas, New Year's Day and the like, the game will trigger new scenes to mark these occasions.

ROOMMATE NOVEL: SATOU YUKA

Year 2000
Publisher Datam Polystar
Developer Fupac

NOT TO BE confused with Roommate Asami, this is made by the same studio responsible for the other Roommate series of games (see Inoue Ryoko: Roommate earlier in this section). Whereas those games, when originally released on the Saturn, relied on the console's internal clock to progress, that isn't the case here, hence the Novel in the title. You play as an unnamed protagonist who's about to enjoy a month of peace and quiet at home while his parents are away, when suddenly a distant relative called Yuka barges into your home to live with you. Although she's quite forward you get along with Yuka, which is distressing for your childhood friend Aya, who has feelings for you. This one's got multiple endings, naturally. ■

FACT

Although the game is designed by the same artists responsible for the other Roommate games, the characters here are completely unrelated.

RUN=DIM AS BLACK SOUL

Year 2001
Publisher Idea Factory
Developer Yuki Enterprise

THIS IS A video game adaptation of *Run=Dim*, a 13-episode anime series that ran on Japanese TV earlier in the year and tells the story of an evil government military that dumps nuclear waste into outer space, and the Green Frontier, a united protection agency trying to stop them. The game is a hex-based strategy affair with lots of giant mechs in it, and has you playing as Yutaka, who works for Green Frontier subsidiary Cherubim Inc. You have to take on and defeat Undine Inc by accepting various missions and using the money you earn for completing them to modify and upgrade your mechs. If you don't know Japanese, this one will be a struggle. ■

FACT

Given that Run=Dim is one of the most impenetrable Japanese releases for non-speakers, it was nice to see that in 2022 a fan-made English translation patch was released.

RUNE CASTER

Year 2000
Publisher Vision Games
Developer Noisia

RUNE CASTER IS an RPG that follows the heroically named Jeremy as he tries to save the fortified city of Grony from an impending war. Jeremy has to head to the cursed land of Melun to find out how he can save the day. Combat takes place in real-time, with Jeremy able to team up with other party members to take out enemies. You can also collect rune stones and use them to create your own monster-summoning spells, which you can then use to make monsters appear during combat to fight on your behalf. If you're somehow able to find someone else who's playing the game, you can battle each other using your own separate spellbooks. ■

FACT

Rune Caster wasn't very well-received, with *Dreamcast Magazine* giving it 14/30 and criticising its slow player movement and unnecessary overuse of text.

RUNE JADE

Year 2000
Publisher Hudson Soft
Developer Hudson Soft

BY SHEER COINCIDENCE, the two Dreamcast games with 'Rune' in the title were released on exactly the same day, despite being completely unrelated. Hudson Soft's offering is an online top-down action RPG, similar in style to the Diablo games. Although it's possible to play the game offline on your own, there are only a couple of maps to choose from and so there isn't much to do unless you play online (which of course is a problem these days). The game is therefore designed to be played in a group of four, where you'll have access to the full suite of around 100 dungeons and can chat with each other as you plunder away. ■

FACT

The game featured an 'AKA system', which gives each player a nickname and changes it depending on their playing style.

SAIBAI NET

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Saibai

THIS WAS A not-for-sale piece of Dreamcast software designed for those interested in growing crops (the title translates to Cultivation Network). Saibai Net was an agricultural information site where would-be farmers would sign up for the latest information on production areas in Japan, and receive information on around 100 agricultural material manufacturers: if you needed pesticides or irrigation equipment, this is where you would go. The Dreamcast disc let you access Saibai Net from the comfort of your sofa: naturally, though, given that it required both an internet connection and a membership to Saibai Net itself the discs are now expensive and useless, unless you put them in soil and plant seeds in the hole to block animals trying to eat them. ■

FACT

Only around 20 per cent of Japan's land is suitable for cultivation, and the agricultural economy in Japan is highly subsidised. Bet you didn't think you'd learn that in a video game book.

SAKA TSUKU TOKUDAIGOU: J.LEAGUE PRO SOCCER CLUB O TSUKUROU!

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Smilebit

THIS IS THE second Dreamcast entry in the Saka Tsuku (Let's Make a Football Club) series, after J.League Pro Soccer Club o Tsukurou! the previous year. The latest player data from both the J1 and J2 leagues had been updated to reflect the 2000 season, and the game added the ability to create a 'satellite' team (a smaller team with reserve players), allowing you to increase your potential roster size. Like its predecessor, the game supported network functionality, but this was given minor enhancements like the ability to swap data with other players. For the most part, though, this wasn't a massive improvement on its predecessor. ■

FACT

In 2002 Sega launched an arcade football management series called World Club Champion Football, where you bought physical packs of player cards and sat them on a giant pitch.

SAKA TSUKU TOKUDAIGOU 2: J.LEAGUE PRO SOCCER CLUB O TSUKUROU!

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Smilebit

I SWEAR THESE titles are getting longer. This was the third and final Saka Tsuku game released on the Dreamcast, and while it once again wasn't an enormous improvement, it added enough that it could be considered the definitive version on the console. All the player lists for the 16 J1 league and 12 J2 league clubs had been updated as of September 2001, and improvements had been made to the player development element of the game. What's more, this edition sold itself as a sort of culmination of the previous titles that had come before it, and as a result it brought back all the fictional players from the older entries in the series. ■

FACT

If you want to try the series for yourself but can't get past its Japanese text, Let's Make a Soccer Team! on the PS2 is the only entry to ever get a western release.

SAKURA MOMOKO GEKIJOU: COJI-COJI

Year 2000
Publisher Marvelous Entertainment
Developer Psy-Gong

THIS QUIRKY LITTLE game is based on the anime of the same name, which itself was a spin-off of a manga series simply called *Coji-Coji*. The Dreamcast interpretation is a board game for 1–4 players in which you visit the Land of Fairy Tales and use the Dreamcast Microphone to chat with the Coji-Coji, a rather adorable race of space creatures. There are more than 80 characters to find and interact with, and 200 trading cards to collect while exploring. There's also a selection of mini-games, as you'd expect with a board game of this ilk, and players can even upload a Coji-Coji to their VMU and carry it around with them, virtual pet style. ■

FACT

The anime ran for two and a half years and racked up 100 episodes and a one-off special, but was never officially given an English translation.

SAKURA TAISEN

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer M2

ALSO KNOWN AS Sakura Wars and originally released for the Saturn, this Dreamcast port is essentially the same game with sharper visuals and improved video quality. The game was described by publisher Sega as a 'dramatic adventure' game, which in reality means it's a tactical RPG with romantic visual novel elements. It's set in 1923 and takes place over 10 episodes, in which you play as Ichiro Ogami, leader of the 'Flower Division' of the Imperial Combat Revue combat unit. Naturally, the Flower Division consists entirely of female soldiers, which is where the dating sim element comes into play. By improving your relationship with the soldiers outside of battle, their combat stats improve, meaning you can be both a lover AND a fighter. ■

FACT

Sakura Wars started life as a game based on Japanese theatre, after creator Oji Hiroi saw a Japanese stage production of a play called Shanghai Rhapsody.

SAKURA TAISEN 2: KIMI, SHINITAMOU KOTO NAKARE

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Overworks

THE SECOND GAME in the Sakura Taisen series (whose title is generally translated by most as Sakura Wars 2: Thou Shalt Not Die) was also released on the Saturn first and is similar to its predecessor in that it once again combines tactical RPG gameplay with romantic visual novel aspects. The sequel takes place a year later and rejoins Ichiro and the Flower Division as they face new enemies: an evil politician called Keigo Kyogoku, and a group of similarly evil magicians called the Black Demons. Hmm, I wonder if they're tied together somehow. This time the game's animated cutscenes were produced by Production IG, the same animation studio responsible for Ghost in the Shell. ■

FACT

The subtitle is taken from a controversial anti-war poem by Japanese poet Yosano Akiko, in which she asks her younger brother not to be a 'human bullet' for the army.

SAKURA TAISEN 3: PARIS WA MOETEIRU KA

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Overworks

THE SECOND GAME in the Sakura Taisen series sold even better than the first, so it was clear that Sega was looking at a franchise now. The third game (often translated as Sakura Wars 3: Is Paris Burning?) sees Ichirou moving to Paris to set up and train a new Flower Division for the Paris Combat Revue, a fighting unit set up by the French government to fight supernatural enemies. New gimmicks this time include an analogue dialogue system where the further you move the stick, the more intense some of your answers are (changing the recipient's reaction), and a new 3D combat system to better suit the Dreamcast, since the Saturn was no longer supported by this point. ■

FACT

Nine months after the release of the game, an animated movie by Production IG, simply titled *Sakura Wars: The Movie*, was released. Critical reception was mixed.

SAKURA TAISEN 4: KOI SEYO, OTOME

Year 2002
Publisher Sega
Developer Overworks

THE FOURTH AND final Sakura Taisen game to be released on a Sega console, this one (generally translated as Sakura Wars 4: Fall in Love, Maidens) is a direct sequel to the third game, and is set six months later. Bringing everything full circle – partly because it was known that the Dreamcast was discontinued – the game sees Ichirou's Tokyo and Paris Flower Divisions joining forces to take on Oukubo Nagayasu, the vengeful and powerful ghost of a samurai who's angry that he was vilified after his death. The game makes clever use of any save files you have from previous entries in the series: if you romanced someone in Tokyo then someone else in Paris, you're going to have to choose between them. ■

FACT

An impressive-looking box set was released on the same day as Sakura Taisen 4, including all four games spread across 10 discs.

SAKURA TAISEN ONLINE

Year 2001
Publisher Sega
Developer Overworks

HERE'S SOMETHING A little different for fans of the Sakura Wars series. This is a sort of parlour game compilation where you play table games like poker and mahjong against players online, or against AI opponents offline if you'd prefer (especially useful these days, given that the online no longer works). There are two versions of the game: one set in Paris and the other set in Tokyo. While the games included are more or less the same, the difference between the two is naturally which of the series' characters appear. Each version had its own big box limited edition too: the Paris version came with a clock, while the Tokyo one came with a pink Dreamcast keyboard. ■

FACT

Limited edition Sakura Taisen-branded Dreamcasts came with Kinematron Hanagumi Mail, a mailing disc that let players email each other with Sakura Taisen images. Naturally, it no longer works.

SAMBA DE AMIGO VER 2000

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sonic Team

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS of Samba de Amigo, this update was released in arcades and on the Dreamcast in Japan. The most obvious improvement is the addition of a bunch of new music tracks: as well as the two Ricky Martin songs that were in the original Samba de Amigo in the west but not in Japan, Ver 2000 adds 14 extra tracks including 'Gonna Fly Now' (the theme from *Rocky*) and 'Bamboleo' by Gipsy Kings. The update also adds a new mode called Hustle, which expands the player's actions beyond simply shaking and posing with the maracas. Now at certain points the game can ask you to swing your arms to the beat, really testing out the motion sensors in those maraca controllers. ■

FACT

At the LA event Sega Gamer's Day in December 2000, Sega announced that this was coming to the west as Samba de Amigo 2001. Obviously, this didn't end up happening.

SANGOKUSHI VI

Year	1999
Publisher	Koei
Developer	Koei

THE SANGOKUSHI GAMES, known in the west as Romance of the Three Kingdoms, are a series of turn-based 'grand strategy' games in which rather than taking control of specific battles you're a warlord in charge of everything that goes into the role, from conquering and taking over territories to ensuring your subjects are happy and well protected. This sixth entry focuses on three central pillars, which it calls 'Time of the Heavens' (the recreation of dramatic historical events), 'Advantage of the Land' (in which the location of your castle and savvy farming can give you a strategic advantage), and 'Bonds of People' (which lets your people share their dreams and listen to those of other officers). By balancing these three, you can apparently conquer China. ■

FACT

This game is impenetrable if you don't know Japanese, but it did get a western PlayStation release as Romance of the Three Kingdoms VI: Awakening of the Dragon.

SANGOKUSHI VI WITH POWER-UP KIT

Year	2000
Publisher	Koei
Developer	Koei

KOEI OFTEN RE-RELEASED games with a 'Power-Up Kit', which essentially meant they were special editions with new content added. For Sangokushi VI, this means a new Tactical Simulation mode where you can take part in famous wars like the battles of Guandu and Red Clif. It also adds three new scenarios, one of which is called Dong Taishi's Murder (don't lie, you're intrigued), as well as five shorter episodes that can be completed with less of a time commitment. There are even some Dreamcast-exclusive scenarios, like Death of Empress Fu. A new Duel mode adds various one-on-one battle modes such as tournament battles and round-robin battles, and a complete database of cities, nobles, shogun ranks and ancient battlefields is included. ■

FACT

The name Romance of the Three Kingdoms is based on the 14th century Chinese novel of the same name, while Sangokushi is the name of a 3rd century historical Chinese text.

SEAMAN: KINDAN NO PET: 2001 NEN TAIOUBAN

Year	2000
Publisher	Vivarium
Developer	Vivarium

THIS ISN'T REALLY a sequel to Seaman, it's more of an updated version designed to add some new features and fix some bugs: the sort of thing that in this day and age would simply be applied as a downloadable patch. The most important feature is an update to the game's voice recognition, meaning Seaman should now be better at understanding you (assuming you can speak Japanese, of course). He can now also understand a wider range of words and phrases, and has been given new lines of dialogue to make conversations more varied. Given that this is the 2001 Edition, the game has also updated its calendars so that Seaman will give you more up-to-date opinions on national holidays and other events. ■

FACT

A guide book was released for Seaman in Japan in 2000. It comes with a bonus disc that can be used with either the original version or the 2001 update to give Seaman more food.

SEGA KARA FOR DREAMCAST

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega Music Networks

SEGA KARA INITIALLY launched in 1994 as a service for the Saturn, in which you could buy an add-on for the console that would turn it into a karaoke machine. This Dreamcast version is a similar situation: players could buy the Dreamcast Karaoke, a device that attached to the Dreamcast's expansion port and came with a Dreamcast-branded copy of Sega Kara for Dreamcast software. The add-on could then connect online and download MIDI songs with accompanying lyrics for players to sing along to. The bundle included a hefty 172-page song book containing the code numbers for the thousands of songs that were available. So if you wanted to sing 'I'll Make Love to You' by Boyz II Men (and why wouldn't you), you'd enter 27230. ■

FACT

The Sega Kara for Dreamcast service ended on 30 April 2006, meaning the whole add-on is completely useless now and only really for collectors.

SEGA TETRIS

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	WOW Entertainment

TETRIS HOPEFULLY NEEDS no introduction (if so, there are plenty of resources online to fill that gap in your knowledge… little Tetris pun there). This Sega version was originally released in arcades before it came to Dreamcast, and attempts to add some colour to a series whose iterations often have a presentation style that's fairly by-the-books. What this means in practice is the game is played with a cartoon monkey standing next to your well, and every time you clear blocks he smacks them away with a hammer. Backgrounds show different world locations every time you go up a level, and a little slot machine gives you bonus points if you clear certain numbers of lines multiple times in a row. It also has online multiplayer. ■

FACT

This is one of only five games to use the Dreamcast Taisen Cable, which is used to link Dreamcast consoles together. Doing so lets you take two players online for four-player multiplayer battles.

SEGAGAGA

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Hitmaker

SEGAGAGA IS ONE big Sega in-joke, and was essentially the company's way of dealing with the fact that it was struggling to continue as a console manufacturer. Declaring itself a 'Sega simulation' on the box, Segagaga is set in 2025 (which in hindsight was a bit presumptuous) and has you playing as Sega Tarou, a young lad who's been asked to turn around the fortunes of Sega, which only has a 3 per cent market share thanks to the all-conquering Dogma (and its suspiciously PlayStation-like logo). You have to talk to the various development teams, who all hate each other, and try to convince them to join forces so they can work together to create the ultimate game that will lead to Sega's success and see it on top again. Many of the enemies you face in the game are Sega employees, and you defeat them – and I'm 100 per cent serious here – by shouting abuse at them and telling them they'll never get a girlfriend, until they're humiliated enough to accept a lower salary and worse working conditions, helping you deliver the dream game within your budget. It's full of references to Sega's history: Alex Kidd, for example, is now a humble game store employee, explaining to you that he was basically ditched by Sega once Sonic came on the scene and stole the spotlight. There are many games in this section that sadly didn't get English translations over the years, but the fact that Segagaga remains Japanese-only may be the biggest tragedy of them all. ■

FACT

In a bit of foreshadowing, the game's final stage is a side-scrolling shoot 'em up in which you have to destroy every Sega console, ending with the Saturn.

SEIREIKI RAYBLADE

Year 2000
Publisher Winkysoft
Developer Winkysoft

OSAKA STUDIO WINKYSOFT was known for two things: having the greatest studio name in the history of video games, and developing the Super Robot Wars series. Seireiki Rayblade (loosely translated as Holy Spirit Machine Rayblade) was an attempt to create a title that didn't rely on licensed robots from other series. The story revolves around Touya Kazami, a 17-year-old high school student whose world is turned upside-down when one day two massive robots crash down onto his school grounds and start fighting. During the melee Touya ends up on one of the robots, and so begins his journey. The game is split into two sections: a turn-based tactical RPG section, and a light visual novel section where you chat with different women on your team. ■

FACT

The game still falls under the Super Robot Wars universe: it's just a story that only uses original robots created for that series, rather than licensed robots from other IPs.

SEKAI FUSHIGI HAKKEN! TROIA MYSTERY ADVENTURE 1186 BC

Year 1999
Publisher TBS
Developer Hitachi Media Force

THIS IS A video game spin-off of educational quiz show *Hitachi World Mystery Discovery!*, a show in which viewers are taught about the wonders and historical mysteries of various parts of the world. The game specifically focuses on Troy, and includes a recreation of the city as it looked in the twelfth century BC. It's mainly played as an adventure game where you have to investigate the city and experience historical events, like the classic wooden horse shenanigans Troy is most often associated with. If the game gives you an itch to find out more about Troy, the disc also contains some video documentary clips showing how it looks today. ■

FACT

World Mystery Discovery started in 1986, and at the time off writing (late 2022) is still around after more than 1,700 episodes.

SENGOKU TURB

Year 1999
Publisher NEC Home Electronics
Developer NEC Home Electronics

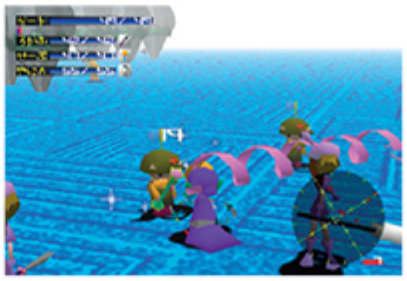
BILLED AS AN 'advanced action role playing adventure', Sengoku Turb's box blurb asks: 'Is there any other game like this?' You'd be hard-pushed to find one: the game follows Jino-chan, a young woman who possesses a power so mysterious that she was shunned from her hometown and became a space wanderer. One day she arrives at the planet Nekopaket, which is inhabited by cat-people being attacked by the evil Doppa and his army. Jino-chan teams up with the cats to help them out. The game is a 3D action RPG, where you accompany the cat soldiers in battle and fight alongside them in real-time. The characters were designed by Yoko Kuroyanagi, one of the designers who worked on the original Tamagotchi. ■

FACT

If there are any cat soldiers you grow particularly attached to as your army levels up, you can choose them to appear alongside you in cutscenes.

SENGOKU TURB: FANFAN I LOVE ME DUNCE-DOUBLENTENDRE

Year 1999
Publisher NEC Home Electronics
Developer NEC Home Electronics



SENGOKU TURB WAS odd enough but this spin-off is even more offbeat. It's basically a collection of 16 mini-games set in the same universe as its predecessor. The most interesting feature for fans of the first game is likely Episode Zero, a prequel to Sengoku Turb where you play as Doppa and instigate the war with the cats in the first place. The mini-games include a third-person run 'n gun, a rail shooter and a racing game, and there's other extra content in there to appeal to fans. There's a gallery of fan art submissions, a music player, a bunch of fan-made icons which can be downloaded to your VMU and a 55-page script which explains plot points that weren't covered in the main game. ■

FACT

The title is meant to say 'Dance', not 'Dunce'. Sega tried to correct it in its online catalogue but then misspelt 'entendre'.

SENTIMENTAL GRAFFITI 2

Year 2000
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Cybelle

THE SATURN WAS home to the first Sentimental Graffiti, in which a boy travels across Japan and visits all the schools he previously transferred from to find the girl who sent him an anonymous love letter. This sequel starts off in a significantly less endearing way by killing off said boy in a road accident during his journey, drawing a rather abrupt line over proceedings. Instead, this time the 12 girls he was travelling to meet have all gathered in the same place for the chap's funeral. Meanwhile, you play as Kouhei Shiina, a college student who has to find his own model for a photo exhibition he's making for an upcoming school festival, and has decided the 12 grieving young women are perfect candidates. ■

FACT

If you pre-ordered the game you got another disc called Sentimental Graffiti: Third Window, which was a promo disc with galleries and videos.

SENTIMENTAL GRAFFITI: YAKUSOKU

Year 2003
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer NEC Interchannel

BY THIS POINT in the book you'll probably be sick of seeing the phrase 'visual novel', but Sentimental Graffiti: Yakusoku (translated as Promise) is probably the one game that fits the description best, mainly because it really isn't a game and literally is a text-based story with little to no player interaction at all. It basically tells the story of the 12 girls from the two main games, and recalls how they all first met the protagonist from the first game. It's based on a serialised novel which was published in *Dengeki G's Magazine*. There was a second serialised novel called *Sentimental Graffiti: Reunion*, but while a game version of this was also planned for release, it ultimately didn't happen. ■

FACT

During a 2018 TV documentary it was revealed that the first game's protagonist didn't actually die: he was overseas with amnesia. The person who died was a criminal who'd stolen his passport.

SHANGHAI DYNASTY

Year 2000
Publisher Success
Developer Success

SHANGHAI WAS ACTIVISION'S version of mahjong solitaire, a single-player game that uses mahjong tiles presented in a series of ornately laid out stacks and challenges the player with removing them all. The basic rule is that you can only remove the tiles as matching pairs, and you can only remove a tile if it's possible to slide it out to the side without disturbing any others (i.e. it has to be on the top of a pile with nothing touching it on at least one side). This Dreamcast take gives players a selection of different tile layouts, and if any poor Japanese customer bought it thinking it was competitive mahjong, they were in luck: that's included too, for the sake of variety. ■

FACT

The first Shanghai was programmed by 19-year-old American Brodie Lockard. Lockard had recently been paralysed in a trampolining accident and used a mouth-stick to type out the code.

SHIKIGAMI NO SHIRO II

Year 2004
Publisher Alfa System
Developer Alfa System

THIS IS A vertically-scrolling shoot 'em up from Alfa System, the studio that would eventually be better known for working on the Tales series with Bandai Namco. It tells the story of a giant castle which suddenly appears in the sky above Tokyo without warning. It's pretty clear that it's up to no good, so off you fly to shoot some rump in a straightforward but entertaining shooter. These days the game isn't cheap, but it was at least ported to the PS2 in the west, where it goes by the name Castle Shikigami 2. It'll set you back more than a couple of bucks too, but it's at least cheaper than the Japanese Dreamcast version. ■

FACT

The first game was also released on PS2 in the west, but it was renamed Mobile Light Force 2, despite having nothing to do with the first Mobile Light Force (aka Gunbird).

SHIN NIPPON PRO WRESTLING: TOUKON RETSUDEN 4

Year 1999
Publisher Tomy Corporation
Developer Yuke's

THE FIRST THREE games in Yuke's Shin Nihon Pro Wrestling: Toukon Retsuden series (translated loosely as New Japan Pro Wrestling: Furious Legend) were exclusive to the PlayStation. For this fourth and final entry, though, publisher Tomy made the hot tag to Sega, giving Dreamcast owners their own exclusive Yuke's grappler. The developer was six months away from releasing the first WWF SmackDown game on PlayStation, but while that series would initially be known for its fast-paced, almost arcade-style gameplay the opposite is the case here: Toukon Retsuden 4 is very much an attempt to replicate pro wrestling in a more realistic manner, which means a generally slower-paced game. The combat system uses a sort of 'rock paper scissors' approach with three types of attack, each of which can overpower one but not the other: strikes beat power moves, which beat submission moves, which beat strikes. If both players attempt a move at the same time, the dominant move will come out on top. The roster consists of 42 wrestlers, most of whom are either from the New Japan Pro Wrestling main roster (including the likes of Tatsumi Fujinami, Shinya Hashimoto and Kensuke Sasaki), its Junior division for wrestlers under 220 lbs (such as Jyushin Liger, Dragon Kid and The Great Sasuke), or its nWo Japan sister stable (with the likes of Keiji Muto, the Great Muta and Masahiro Chono). The remaining few are from other organisations: any excuse to get the legendary Antonio Inoki in there, frankly. ■

FACT

nWo Japan started on an episode of WCW Nitro, when Masahiro Chono announced that he was rejecting NJPW to become the leader of a Japanese arm of the nWo (this was all a storyline).

SHIN HONKAKU HANAFUDA

Year 1999
Publisher Altron
Developer Altron

THERE'S HANAFUDA, THEN there's Shin Honkaku Hanafuda (which translates as Authentic Hanafuda). In this case, the authenticity appears to refer to the game's presentation, which does its best to maintain a traditional Japanese look, to tie in with the history of the cards. Hanafuda cards can be used to play a variety of different games, and this lets you choose between four of them: Koi Koi, Hana Awase, Hachi-Hachi and Oicho-Kabu (which is similar to Baccarat). Each of the four games can be played in a Free Play mode where you can just chill out, or a Tournament mode where you face off against more difficult opponents looking for your blood. And by that I mean looking to beat you at hanafuda. ■

FACT

The worst hand you can get in a game of Oicho-Kabu is an eight, a nine and a three. In Japanese this can pronounced 'yattsu, ku, san', or 'ya, ku, sa' for short. This is where the word 'yakuza' comes from.

THE SHINRI GAME

Year 2001
Publisher Visit
Developer Visit

ALSO KNOWN AS The Psychological Game, this is a quiz game of sorts where there are no right or wrong answers: the whole point is to have the game analyse your personality. Here's an example question: 'You have decided to give your girlfriend a gold pendant. You have four different pendant shapes to choose from, which do you choose?' It's hardly going to give Wilhelm Wundt a run for his money, but it's all a bit of fun. You can also take an online questionnaire and compare your results with your friends'. If all this brain analysis is a bit much, there are three mini-games for up to four players: a top down wild west shooter, a memory-match music game and a four-player competitive Breakout game. ■

FACT

There were many versions of The Shinri Game, going back as far as the Super Famicom. In fact, there were 10 separate Shinri Game editions on the PlayStation.

SHINSEIKI EVANGELION: AYANAMI IKUSEI KEIKAKU

Year	2002
Publisher	Broccoli
Developer	Westone

THIS IS A 'raising simulation' based on the popular anime and manga series Neon Genesis Evangelion. You play as an officer from Nerv (the organisation responsible for building the Evangelion mechs), who's been put in charge of a slightly odd mission: to watch over and take care of Rei Ayanami, a 14-year-old Evangelion pilot known as the First Child. Over the course of a year, you have to decide Rei's weekly schedule and juggle how much of her time is spent in education, doing her Nerv duties and having fun. Depending on how you raise Rei, her personality can end up being completely different to the way it is in the show: you can even turn her into an anime nerd. ■

FACT

The PS2 version of the game adds a second scenario in which you can instead look after Asuka, the arrogant Second Child from the anime.

SHINSEIKI EVANGELION: TYPING E-KEIKAKU

Year	2001
Publisher	Gainax
Developer	Gainax

IF YOU READ the entry on The Typing of the Dead and wondered why there weren't more games that made use of the Dreamcast Keyboard, kindly step this way. Typing E-Keikaku is based on the *Neon Genesis Evangelion* anime and gives the player a series of what are essentially typing mini-games. There are seven levels, each based on a different popular scene from the anime. One mission, for example, has you trying to quickly enter words to stop a runaway Jet Alone mech, while another puts you inside EVA-02 and tasks you with jumping over a bunch of ships, essentially using them as stepping stones, to avoid being attacked by an Angel. ■

FACT

In terms of freebies, this takes some beating: the game comes with a satchel with the NERV logo from the anime branded on it.

SHINSEIKI EVANGELION: TYPING HOKAN KEIKAKU

Year	2001
Publisher	Gainax
Developer	Gainax

IF YOU'VE SEEN everything Typing E-Keikaku has to offer and consider yourself some sort of typing wizard, then Typing Hokan Keikaku is here to bring you back down to size. Considered an accompaniment to the first game (Hokan Keikaku roughly translates to Supplementary Plan), this offers a further seven lessons where you type in words to help the anime's characters sing karaoke, make lunch and flirt with each other. If you have a save file from E-Kaikaku, you can use that to add a new Lesson 5.5, where you can dance with a chibi version of Rei Ayanami, the series' 'First Child'. The game supports both kana (Japanese characters) and romaji (the Roman alphabet) as input. ■

FACT

If you have a Dreamcast Keyboard gathering dust, both these games were given fan-made English translation patches in 2021.

SHIROTSUME SOUWA: EPISODE OF THE CLOVERS

Year	2003
Publisher	NEC Interchannel
Developer	Littlewish

THIS VISUAL NOVEL was highly obscene when originally released on PC, before its explicit sex scenes were removed for the Dreamcast version, at which point it status was reduced to merely 'extremely questionable'. You play as Soji Tsunagwa, a scientist who works for a special research institute. Soji has managed to genetically engineer three military androids who look and act like young girls. He can't bring himself to treat them as weapons, so instead he loves them like family members (and sometimes more, disgracefully). Eventually, though, the research institute is attacked, and the android girls will need to fight after all. Some things just don't work in western culture, and it's probably fair to say this is one of them. ■

FACT

The game tells its story with what it calls the Floating Frame Director, in which small comic panels appear in different places on the screen, instead of standard full-screen images.

SIMPLE 2000 SERIES DC 1: BITTERSWEET FOOLS

Year 2002
Publisher D3 Publisher
Developer HuneX

THE SIMPLE SERIES of games were released on various platforms by D3 Publisher and provided players with a selection of low-budget games. The four Dreamcast efforts were Simple 2000 titles, which means they each cost ¥2,000. Bittersweet Fools is a visual novel which takes place in Florence and follows Alan, a chap who used to be an assassin for the mafia but is now trying to keep his head low. That is, until he meets the granddaughter of a mafia leader and Alan finds himself being dragged back into a criminal life he thought he'd left behind. Like many Dreamcast visual novels that were ported from PC games, most of the more explicit content has been removed for console players. ■

FACT

The first Simple game was Simple 1500 Series Vol 1: The Mahjong, which was released on the PlayStation in 1998.

SIMPLE 2000 SERIES DC 02: NATSUIRO CELEBRATION

Year 2002
Publisher D3 Publisher
Developer HuneX

THE SECOND SIMPLE 2000 game is another visual novel, this time involving a private high school student called Kosuke Kanzaki (though his name can be changed). Kosuke has been making the most of his last summer holiday, working on summer courses, taking on part-time jobs and hanging out with his friend Kumiko. One day, though, Kosuke gets a message from his father saying 'come back to your parents' house on 21 August', meaning he has to make the most of what time he has. Like your typical visual novel there are different girls who can be romanced, but the game includes randomised elements which change the plot sequence and the places you can visit each time you start a new game. ■

FACT

Natsuiro Celebration was already released as part of the Simple 1500 Series on the PlayStation, meaning it was more expensive (though still cheap) on the Dreamcast.

SIMPLE 2000 SERIES DC 03: FUREAI

Year 2002
Publisher D3 Publisher
Developer HuneX

IF IT'S MORE reasonably priced visual novel goodness you're looking for, the Simple 2000 Series continues to deliver with the third in the series. This one puts you in the role of a 19-year-old who's failed his university entrance exams and is wondering what to do with his life. As he tries to get it back on the right track, he decides to take on a part-time job as a teaching assistant in a private school over the summer. There he's given the task of helping five different girls to pass their exams, and if you don't think this is going to lead to shenanigans in which it's going to be possible to romance these girls then you really haven't been paying attention to this book by now. ■

FACT

Think four Simple 2000 games is a decent attempt? Well, consider this: the PlayStation got no fewer than 143 Simple games, 126 of which were part of an even cheaper Simple 1500 series.

SIMPLE 2000 SERIES DC 04: OKAERITSU!!

Year 2002
Publisher D3 Publisher
Developer HuneX

THE LAST OF the four Simple 2000 games is, you guessed it, a visual novel. In this one you play as Youhei Omida, a 20-year-old in his third year of university, who decides to travel back to his birthplace for a month as part of a teacher training course. During his trip, Youhei befriends five other girls, who – and you really aren't going to believe this – are all attractive. And what's more, just to tick off your visual novel bingo, one of them is a childhood friend. The game is a fairly by-the-numbers romantic visual novel, but does have one interesting selling point: the character designer, Kazuko Tadano, also designed the characters in the first two seasons of the *Sailor Moon* anime. ■

FACT

Simple 2000 Series 2, 03 and 04 were all released on the same day, so if you lived in Japan and liked your visual novels you were in hog's heaven that day.

SISTER PRINCESS: PREMIUM EDITION

Year 2002
Publisher Media Works
Developer Stack

SISTER PRINCESS STARTED life as a monthly story in *Dengeki G's Magazine*, in which a 'brother' lived with nine sisters and readers could vote for their favourite one. In the game version there are now 12 sisters, but the premise is similar: playing as a normal young man, you have to live with all 12 girls, each of whom has their own personality. Oddly, despite being sisters, the three new ones are French, German and English, but I don't think this one's aiming for realism. The whole thing's actually fairly innocent as far as dating sims go and each girl has two different endings: a normal one where you become best friends, and one where you discover you aren't related and can get married. ■

FACT

Curious about the Premium Edition title? The Dreamcast version was released a year after the PlayStation one and adds two new scenarios set during Christmas and Valentine's Day.

SNOW

Year 2003
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Studio Mebius

YET ANOTHER VISUAL novel that started off as an explicit PC title before being cut down to an 'all ages' rating on the Dreamcast. In this one you play as Kanata Izumo, a man travelling back to his childhood village to help his cousin Tsugumi manage a small inn called Dragon God Keep. Naturally, during his time at the village, Kanata interacts with a number of village girls, including the 'main' girl Sumino, whose father has died and who is obsessed with steam buns (the two are unrelated). While the Dreamcast version removes all the explicit scenes from the adults-only PC version, it does add one thing that wasn't on PC: full voice acting for each character. ■

FACT

The title is based on the village: it was once protected by a dragon goddess who then fell in love with a human, and because that was forbidden it became permanently covered in snow.

SORCERIAN: SHICHISEI MAHOU NO SHITO

Year 2000
Publisher Victor Interactive Software
Developer Exe-Create

SORCERIAN BEGAN LIFE as a Japan-only release on the NEC PC-8801 by Nihon Falcom way back in 1987, before seeing a number of ports throughout the '90s. The fifth game in the Dragon Slayer series, it has you controlling a party of up to four characters and taking on a series of action RPG scenarios as you run, jump, slash and magic your way through the enemies you encounter. Naturally, this Dreamcast version isn't a straight port but a complete remake, making the most of the 13-year gap between releases by swapping out its 2D worlds for polygonal 3D ones (though it does retain the original's 2D plane, making for more of a 2.5D adventure. ■

FACT

One of the game's new Dreamcast-only scenarios is called Temple of the Sun. This is a reference to another Nihon Falcom game, 1986's Asteka II: Temple of the Sun.

SOUKOU NO KIHEI: SPACE GRIFFON

Year 1999
Publisher Panther Software
Developer Panther Software

YOU MAY KNOW this game better as Space Griffon VF-9, which is the name it went by when it was released on the PlayStation in North America. The Dreamcast version, released four years later, was a Japan-only affair, but it's still relatively playable for non-Japanese speakers as long as you don't care about plot. It's a first-person shooter set on a space colony on the moon, in which the player has to visit a facility called Hamlet, which it turns out is swarming with security robots, zombies and bio-monsters. Luckily, you're in a ruddy big mech, which means you can both deal out and receive healthy amounts of damage. The Dreamcast version offers improved AI and visuals. ■

FACT

The game originally started life on the PC-98 in Japan back in 1993, when it was known as Hamlet and was more of a first-person dungeon crawler.

SPACE CHANNEL 5: PART 2

Year 2002
Publisher Sega
Developer United Game Artists

THE ORIGINAL SPACE Channel 5 may be the game players remember most fondly, partly because it was the game that first introduced us to Sega fan favourite Ulala, and partly because it actually got a western release on the Dreamcast. Its sequel is arguably the better game, though, building on its predecessor with a catchier soundtrack and new features such as 40 unlockable costumes and a survival mode. This time our jigging journalist has been sent out to cover the Rhythm Rogues, an evil dance-loving gang who are holding people hostage with their dance moves and have even kidnapped Space President Peace. While the gameplay is the same Simon Says style affair, with enemies dancing in different directions and Ulala repeating the sequence, other things have been thrown in to mix things up a bit such as the introduction of instrument battles. The sequel also gives a much bigger role to Michael Jackson, who had appeared in a small cameo the first time around (mainly because he asked to be involved at the last minute) but is now a fully-fledged character, Space Michael. Voiced by Jackson himself, once Space Michael is rescued he joins Ulala in many of her dances. Thankfully, although the Dreamcast version was a Japan-only affair, Space Channel 5 has seen a handful of western ports over the years including an HD version on the Xbox 360 and Steam, so it's not enormously difficult to find a way to play it relatively cheaply. ■

FACT

Space Michael pronounces Ulala's name as 'you-la-la' in Part 2, which is wrong (the whole point is it sounds like 'ooh la la'). This is despite the fact he says it correctly in the first game.

SUIGETSU MAYOIGOKORO

Year 2004
Publisher Kid
Developer Kid

IN THIS VISUAL novel by veteran genre publisher Kid, you play as Toruya, a young man having a vivid dream in which he sees a girl standing on the beach. In the dream, Toruya sees himself pulling back a bow and shooting the girl with an arrow. When he wakes up, he realises he's lying in a hospital bed with memory loss (a convenient but massively overused trope, let's face it). While lying in his ward, Toruya is regularly helped out by a girl called Yuki, who claims to be his maid, and his apparent childhood friend Karin. As he starts trying to make a recovery, though, Toruya is stunned one day to find a blind girl called Nanami standing at his bed. It's the girl from his dream. ■

FACT

Yuki became something of a favourite among visual novel fans, to the extent that reputable figure company Good Smile (maker of the Figma line) released a PVC figurine of her.

SUIKA

Year 2002
Publisher Princess Soft
Developer Princess Soft

ALTHOUGH AT FIRST glance Suika is the usual visual novel lark, it does differ from other Dreamcast visual novels in that it's actually four separate stories in one, each set in the same rural town of Tokiwa Village. That's not to say they're wildly different, mind you: each story is still a relatively straightforward romance between a male protagonist and one or two girls. There is some slight overlap between the four stories but for the most part they're all standalone. Suika was also released on the PlayStation under the alternate title Water Summer, and is one of the few visual novels in this section of the book that was actually translated to English, when Japanese publisher MangaGamer released a localised PC port in 2009. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast port had a limited edition version which contained a drama CD. Only 20,000 copies were available.

SUNRISE EIYUUTAN

Year 1999
Publisher Sunrise Interactive
Developer Atelier-Sai

THIS TACTICAL RPG is a crossover title based on the various robot works created by Japanese animation studio Sunrise (now known as Bandai Namco Filmworks). The game brings together creations from the likes of Mobile Suit Gundam (and its various spin-offs), Panzer World Galient, Metal Armor Dragonar and Armored Trooper Votoms, for a total of around 100 mechs from nearly 30 different titles.

The battle system is interesting, with some unique features. For example, when one of your robots is destroyed it doesn't 'die', it gets added to a revive queue, along with any items you've used. On each turn, a random thing from the queue is revived: this means players who use too many items have less chance of quickly reviving a downed robot. ■

FACT

Giant robot series aside, Sunrise is also known for the likes of *Cowboy Bebop*, *Yoroiden Samurai Troopers* and *Steamboy*.

SUPER PRODUCERS: MEZASE SHOWBIZ KAI

Year 1999
Publisher Hudson Soft
Developer Hudson Soft

THERE ARE PLENTY of games out there for people who dream of being pop stars, but what about the people who discover them in the first place? Super Producers lets you become the next George Martin (the Beatles guy, not the *Game of Thrones* guy) as you attempt to find and nurture the next musical icon. You get to hold auditions to find the best singers, design their hairstyle and clothing and take part in the likes of songwriting, arranging gigs and setting up promotional events. As your singers get better they appear on TV, win awards and go on tour, but they're also more likely to end up in some sort of press scandal. Be warned: the game is packed with Japanese text. ■

FACT

According to his brother, one of prolific music producer Simon Cowell's earliest jobs was as a runner on Stanley Kubrick's horror film *The Shining*.

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II X FOR MATCHING SERVICE

Year 2001
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

ALTHOUGH CAPCOM WAS mostly focused on bringing original games and newer arcade ports to the Dreamcast, it also ported over a couple of its older titles for use with Matching Service, its online multiplayer framework. Super Puzzle Fighter II X, then, is an online-enabled version of the puzzle game previously released on arcade, Saturn and PlayStation five years earlier.

There were a couple of minor tweaks made. Most notably, players could now choose between three modes: X-Mode (the usual game), Y-Mode (similar to Columns) and Z-Mode (similar to Tetris Attack). Other than that, it looked practically the same as the previous versions. Online is obviously no longer active, but it's still perfectly playable offline. ■

FACT

Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo HD Remix, released on Xbox 360 and PS3, not only improved the graphics but also included the Y and Z modes from the Dreamcast version.

SUPER ROBOT TAISEN ALPHA FOR DREAMCAST

Year 2001
Publisher Banpresto
Developer Banpresto

THE SUPER ROBOT Taisen (Wars) franchise dates back to 1991, and is a series of tactical RPGs that cross over robots from a variety of anime, manga and video games. Alpha was the 13th game released in the series and is a hefty 100-chapter story, which splits at one point with the player able to choose between a 'super robot' storyline (where your robot is basically a superhero and has some sort of magical or mystical power) and a 'real robot' storyline (where your robot is more 'realistic' in that it could potentially be made in the real world in the future). The Dreamcast version differs from the PlayStation one in that battles are in 3D rather than 2D. ■

FACT

At the time off writing, the latest game in the series is Super Robot Wars 30, released in 2021 to mark its 30th anniversary. It's the first in the main series to get a western release.

SUPER RUNABOUT

Year	2000
Publisher	Climax Entertainment
Developer	Climax Entertainment

THE VERSION OF Super Runabout: San Francisco Edition that was released in the west is actually an updated version of the one that originally arrived in Japan in 2000. Simply titled Super Runabout, the first release was practically the same game but it suffered from a hefty number of bugs and some felt the vehicle handling was all over the place.

When it came time to bring the game to the west, developer Climax Entertainment decided to fix a number of these bugs and revise the handling of the 30 available cars, leading to Super Runabout: San Francisco Edition. This updated version was also released in Japan, so the version you see here is listed for the sake of completion only: its successor renders it obsolete. ■

FACT

Super Runabout is actually the third game in the series. The first two, Runabout (aka Felony 11-79) and Runabout 2, were released on the PlayStation.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II X FOR MATCHING SERVICE

Year	2000
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

MUCH LIKE ITS re-release of Super Puzzle Fighter II X, this is another of Capcom's classic games brought to Dreamcast for use with its Matching Service online framework. This time it's the game known in the west as Super Street Fighter II Turbo, originally released in 1994 and brought to Sega's console with little in the way of actual graphical improvements. What it does offer, though, is an option to turn on the three bonus stages – destroying the car, breaking the dropping barrels, smacking the oil drums – that had featured in previous versions of Street Fighter II but had been removed for the arcade version of Super Turbo. If you liked these bonus stages, then, you could argue it's even better than the arcade original. ■

FACT

It's generally agreed that the vehicle in the iconic car-smashing Street Fighter II bonus stage is based on the Toyota Celsior, known as the Lexus LS400 outside of Japan.

SWEET SEASON

Year	2003
Publisher	Takuyo
Developer	Takuyo

YOU NEVER THOUGHT it was possible but finally, it's the shogi-themed visual novel you always dreamed of. Sweet Season has you playing as Yoshinori Asamiya, a first-year student who's part of his school's shogi club (shogi being the Japanese chess-type board game, in case you didn't know). One day, Yoshinori meets Ayumi Jinguji as she's out walking her dog. It turns out Ayumi goes to a different school and, wouldn't you know it, she's a big fan of shogi as well. Kids can't get enough of shogi in this town, it seems, it's their version of hip-hop. Over time the pair become friends and, of course, become more than that if you play your cards right. Or your shogi, as it were. ■

FACT

Despite the game's subject matter, it's not actually possible to play shogi in it, which is a relief if you don't know how to play it. Now all you need is to learn to read Japanese.

TAISEN NET GIMMICK: CAPCOM & PSIKYO ALL STARS

Year	2001
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Psikyo

IF YOU GET excited about the idea of a crossover game that brings together all the most popular characters from Capcom and shoot 'em up studio Psikyo, you may want to temper that excitement until you learn that Taisen Net Gimmick is actually a mahjong game. Granted, it's a mahjong game where the characters include Ryu, Chun-Li and Cammy from Street Fighter, Marion from Gunbird and Koyori from Sengoku Ace, but it's a mahjong game nonetheless so if that's not your cup of tea then you may want to give it a miss. If you're willing to try it out, it does at least have a (Japanese) mahjong tutorial to teach newcomers attracted by the presence of characters they recognise. ■

FACT

The game is actually a spin-off of Psikyo's Taisen Hot Gimmick series, which is basically strip mahjong. Naturally, everyone stays clothed in this one.

TAKO NO MARINE

Year 2002
Publisher Micro Cabin
Developer Micro Cabin

THIS COLOURFUL PUZZLE game stars a young girl called Marine who's accompanied by an octopus. The aim in each stage is to get from your starting point to a red flag on the other end, but this is of course easier said than done when you realise there are traps and hazards dotted around. The game is played in a sort of point-and-click adventure style, as you use a cursor to tell Marine where to go. When she reaches a trap a series of icons appear, letting you choose what she should do to it: kick it, punch it, jump up and down in front of it, try to eat it, that sort of thing. There are also regular cutscenes to keep a narrative going. ■

FACT

The blurb on the back of the box has a rather convincing sales pitch: 'Why don't you join us and get rid of the rust in your brain?'

TAMA-CUE

Year 2004
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer HuneX

HERE'S ANOTHER VISUAL novel that was sanitised a touch on Dreamcast so it isn't quite as graphic as its original PC version. In Tama-cue you play as a university student whose body has become smaller thanks to Mel, a cupid-like angel. In order to get your original body back, you have to make other people happy through love and collect the energy they give off from such feelings. If you can collect a girl's experiences and combine them in the right way, she'll have a dream at bedtime: by discussing the dream with Mel the story will progress. Or, if you want to be sneaky, you can keep the contents of the dream a secret, and potentially fall in love with the girl yourself. ■

FACT

After the game was released on PC, some players wanted to romance the hero's sister (look, I don't know) so an extra scenario was added in which they are no longer blood relatives.

TANAKA TORAHIKO NO URUTORARYU SHOGI: IBISHIA ANAGUMA-HEN

Year 1999
Publisher Arc System Works
Developer Arc System Works

I DON'T CARE what you say, you haven't learned how to play shogi unless you've learned it from 9th dan shogi master Torahiko Tanaka, and I won't hear another word on the matter. Thankfully this game will allow you to accomplish exactly this, with Tanaka-san himself taking you through a series of lessons on how to set up your pieces, plan your attack, counter the more popular 'furibisha' (Ranging Rook) strategies and ultimately win. Once you use Tanaka's training to win a certain number of games against the AI in a row, you can send off for a 'Shodan Certificate' to prove you know your stuff. ■

FACT

Torahiko Tanaka was a former Kisei shogi title holder and former senior managing director of the Japan Shogi Association, so he knows his way around a board.

TANTEI SHINSHI DASH!

Year 2000
Publisher Abel Software
Developer Abel Software

THIS INTERESTING GAME is part adventure, part visual novel, and puts the players in the trenchcoat of Class A detective Agyou Souma (the game's title translates to Gentleman Detective Dash!). Over the course of the game you take on a series of cases – the discovery of a headless corpse after a ghost sighting, a missing husband and so on – and can sometimes juggle multiple investigations at the same time. The game was originally released on the PC, but this Dreamcast version (which adds the Dash! moniker) makes a number of significant changes, including full voice acting, new scenes and a complete removal of any 18+ scenes. Because a headless corpse is fine but God forbid it's got its bum out. ■

FACT

In the game, Souma doesn't smoke but still carries a cigarette in his pocket, so he can smoke it right before he dies. Joke's on him, the first time is apparently the worst.

TENOHIRA O, TAIYOU NI

Year	2004
Publisher	Princess Soft
Developer	Princess Soft

AKIO HARUNO IS a high school student who doesn't really do much with his life, except spending each day as it comes in his idyllic countryside village. That all changes when, right before the summer holidays start, he meets Towa Natsunomori, a new girl who's transferred to Akio's class. Despite being certain that he's never met Towa before, the girl still somehow gives him an oddly nostalgic feeling, so he befriends her and quickly starts getting close to her. This in turn unlocks a bunch of forgotten memories about his past, just in time for the summer holidays starting, allowing him to rebuild relationships with the friends he's grown apart from over the years. This is another visual novel that removes the PC version's explicit content. ■

FACT

A fan disc called Tenohira O, Taiyou Ni AB was released on PC and adds two new stories called Before and After, essentially acting like a short prequel and sequel.

TENTAMA: 1ST SUNNY SIDE

Year	2001
Publisher	Kid
Developer	Kid

TENTAMA IS PART visual novel, part It's a Wonderful Life. You play as Shina Hayasegawa, a teenager who had previously been in love but his girlfriend died, leaving him feeling deeply lonely. One day, a trainee angel called Karin appears: it's her job to help Shina find love (and therefore happiness) again, which in turn will make Karin a fully-fledged angel. However, Karin finds herself falling for Shina, and since angel-human love is forbidden (as if forbidden love has stopped some of the other visual novels in this book) she has to help Shina find love while hiding her own feelings. The Dreamcast version builds on the PlayStation version (released nine months earlier) by adding two extra characters for Shina to potentially romance. ■

FACT

Karin appears in Kid Mix Section, a PlayStation mahjong game in which a bug invades four Kid games (Memories Off, Never7, Tentama and Yume no Tsubasa) and mixes up their worlds and girls.

TETRIS 4D

Year	1998
Publisher	Bullet-Proof Software
Developer	Bullet-Proof Software

LOOK, I KNOW THE fourth dimension is something of a hypothetical construct but don't worry about it too much with this one because it appears that Bullet-Proof Software is just referring to the fact that Tetris 4D supports up to four players in its battle mode. It also has a bit of a gloomier look, with its background showing a variety of dark, industrial settings (one example sits the well in front of some large cogs and a spinning air vent fan). That aside, the only other thing it offers is the standard single-player Tetris you'd expect in any other version, with no ability to play online or anything like that. Of the three Tetris games on the Dreamcast, this is probably the one most lacking in features. ■

FACT

In 2002, the smallest game of Tetris ever was played under a microscope at the Department of Physics of Complex Systems in Amsterdam, using pieces smaller than grains of sand.

TOKUSATSU BOUKEN KATSUGEKI SUPER HERO RETSUDEN

Year	2000
Publisher	Banpresto
Developer	ALU

THIS IS A spin-off of Banpresto's Compati Hero series, in which a number of superhero franchises cross over. The game, which consists of over 100 mini 'episodes', has you picking a hero and using them to fight evil forces. At the start you can choose between three heroes: Kamen Rider no 1 (from Kamen Rider), Kikaider (from Android Kikaider) or Akaranger (from Secret Sentai Gorenger). As you play you can gather more heroes, with the game covering such series as Inazuman, Robot Detective and Space Ironman Kyodyne. Although the screenshot may make the game look like a tactical RPG it's actually a beat 'em up, albeit a fairly limited one. ■

FACT

The main Compati Hero series (and its Compati Sports spin-offs) usually also include Ultraman, and have at times featured the likes of Godzilla and Devilman.

TOKYO BUS GUIDE

Year 1999
Publisher Fortyfive
Developer Fortyfive

SOMETIMES THE MOST seemingly 'normal' jobs can make for the most interesting games. Tokyo Bus Guide is a rather strict simulation which puts you in the role of a bus driver in Tokyo, and rather than careering through the city like a maniac in the style of Crazy Taxi you instead have to adhere to Japan's driving laws for the safety of yourself and your passengers. You have to manually open and close your doors for them, announce stops to them and use your turn signals correctly so the other traffic on the road knows what you're doing. As you mess up, a little green gauge will slowly turn red, with the game ending if it goes completely crimson. ■

FACT

The game was re-released a year later with a second disc containing videos that gave advice on how to play the game.

TREASURE STRIKE

Year 2000
Publisher Kid
Developer h.a.n.d.

THIS THIRD-PERSON ACTION game is a sort of mix between Power Stone (albeit a slower, clunkier version) and Capture the Flag. The aim is to find keys which can be used to open the treasure chests dotted around the stage, then run back to your base and drop off the loot without being intercepted and beaten up by someone. There's a great deal of customisation in the game, not only in how your character looks but also in the weapons you use. Over time you're able to combine weapons, so if you combine a launcher-type weapon with, say, an angry seagull you end up with an angry seagull launcher. Treasure Strike used to have online multiplayer, which obviously no longer works now. ■

FACT

Treasure Strike has a four-player split-screen mode, so with a bit of Japanese knowledge (or patience to figure it out) there's still a fun multiplayer game to be found here.

TRICOLORE CRISE

Year 2000
Publisher Victor Interactive Software
Developer Victor Interactive Software

TRICOLORE CRISE IS a JRPG in which you get to choose your protagonist from three different girls called Janice, Lanan and Anemea. The human race is under threat by an evil demon called Iblis, so a tower is built as a means of attack. There's just one thing: someone needs to be the Lord of the Tower, so our heroes take on a series of challenges to prove themselves worthy of the role. As you make your way through the game and its turn-based battles, you can call on a party of 'familiars' to help you during fights. These familiars also let you adjust the game's encounter rate: if you walk with a familiar 'equipped' you're more likely to get into a battle. ■

FACT

If you pre-ordered the game you also got Tricolore Crise: Art Palette, a second disc featuring a gallery of artwork.

TRIGGERHEART EXELICA

Year 2007
Publisher Warashi
Developer Warashi

HAD IT NOT been for Karous releasing just two weeks later, this would have been the final officially released Dreamcast game. Instead, Triggerheart Exelica will have to settle for being a solid vertically scrolling shoot 'em up which is a little pricey to import (though you may not have to, as the Trivia box shows). Its unique mechanic (as most shoot 'em ups needed to have by this point) is the ability to grab enemies and either throw them at others or use them as a shield. You play as one of two women wearing flying equipment called 'Spec Suits': Exelica has a wide range of fire but has slower anchor and move speed, while Crueltear is speedy and has faster anchors but a narrower firing range. ■

FACT

An Xbox 360 version was released in 2008 and, at the time off writing, is still available to buy on current Xbox stores via backwards compatibility for less than $10.

TRIZEAL

Year 2005
Publisher Triangle Service
Developer Triangle Service

ANOTHER VERTICALLY SCROLLING shoot 'em up released late in the Dreamcast's life, Trizeal was brought to arcades first by Taito then later self-published by its developer Triangle Service on Dreamcast. The gimmick in this one is the ability to transform your ship on the fly to give you three different shot types: a wide shot, a narrow laser and homing missiles. The twist is that you can only power up each weapon while you're actively using it, so it pays to switch between them regularly. What's more, once a weapon hits level 4, it sticks around in a weaker form if you switch to another one, meaning if all three weapons are powered up you can essentially fire them all at the same time. ■

FACT

Triangle Service posted an odd 'SOS' statement begging people to pre-order Trizeal because if it sold badly they'd shut down. 'A bull is following me,' it read. 'It's in SPAIN.'

TSUKI WA HIGASHI NI HA WA NISHI NA: OPERATION SANCTUARY

Year 2004
Publisher Alchemist
Developer HuneX

THERE'S A LOT to take in with this visual novel. You play as Naoki Kazumi, a boy who lost both his parents and his memory in an accident five years earlier. Naoki now stays with his cousin Matsuri and is living about as normal a life as he could given the circumstances. One day, while Naoki is sleeping on a rooftop, a girl called Mikoto falls from the sky, claiming to be from 100 years in the future. Mikoto's gone back in time to look for her brother and it just so happens that Naoki looks just like him, so naturally hijinks ensue. Obviously, looking like her brother doesn't stop what you'd expect to happen, even if it's not graphic like it is in the PC release. ■

FACT

The game got a 13-episode anime series in which the girl Naoki ends up with is Honami, his childhood friend who'd been taking care of him since the accident.

TSUUSHIN TAISEN LOGIC BATTLE DAISESSEN

Year 2000
Publisher Fortyfive
Developer Fortyfive

REGULARLY REFERRED TO as simply Daisessen, this puzzle game uses a grid-like battle mode which is probably closer to Battleships than anything else, in that you lay down your units then try to find those of your opponent, using logic (and luck, let's face it) to figure out which squares they could potentially be hiding under. It's set on a peaceful island which is supposed to have an everlasting spring, but one day snow starts falling. The culprits are the nasty Snow Clan, so it's up to you to bomb their chilly rumps back to from whence they came. You can build your character's stats, then use them to play against others locally or online (though not the latter anymore, obviously). ■

FACT

Critics complained the game wasn't quite as compelling as Battleships because some of the units are only one square in size, leading to far more guesswork and less strategy.

TWINKLE STAR SPRITES

Year 2000
Publisher SNK
Developer ADK

THIS SHOOT 'EM up was released in arcades in 1996, then came to the Neo Geo and the Saturn before being ported to the Dreamcast a few years later. Rather than a simple stage-based affair like other shooters, Twinkle Star Sprites is actually a competitive shoot 'em up with mechanics that feel a lot more like a puzzle game like Tetris or Puyo Puyo. The screen is split down the middle and each player gets their own waves of enemies to defeat, and by clearing them well enough you can 'attack' your opponent to make life harder for them. The Dreamcast version includes the option to put back in the slowdown that's in the arcade and Neo Geo versions, in case you're used to it. ■

FACT

Twinkle Star Sprites is one of the few Japanese Dreamcast games with an option to change the in-game text to English.

TYPING OF THE DATE

Year	2001
Publisher	Hudson Soft
Developer	Hudson Soft

NOT TO BE confused with Sega's zombie spell 'em up The Typing of the Dead, this is a visual novel which uses the Dreamcast Keyboard instead of a normal controller. Instead of simply choosing from a selection of responses you have to actually type out the reply you want to give. The game shows both kana and romaji characters, but the romaji ones still spell out words in Japanese (so instead of typing out 'are you in the same class?' you have to type out 'tasika onazi kurasuono?'). This actually leads to one of the game's more surprising plus points: if you're currently learning the language, this is a great way to see the Japanese kana characters while typing out the phonetic pronunciation. ■

FACT

The game gives you a time limit for each reply and punishes you if you take too long, so you can't slowly brute force your way through by translating it: you do need to be able to at least speak Japanese.

UNDER DEFEAT

Year	2006
Publisher	G.rev
Developer	G.rev

IN CASE IT wasn't clear from the last few pages, the mid 2000s for the Dreamcast was this odd period where the otherwise flatlining system would occasionally kick into life with another shoot 'em up. In March 2006, G.rev (developer of Border Down) shouted 'CLEAR' and defibrillated the console with Under Defeat, a vertically scrolling schmup with a military theme. Playing as a helicopter, you have to make your way through five levels blasting everything in sight. Although its gameplay was rather straightforward and mostly lacking in gimmickry, it's still notable as not only being one of the last Dreamcast games – indeed, it was billed as 'the last' until Triggerheart Exelica and Karous turned up the following year – but also one of its best-looking. ■

FACT

An HD version of Under Defeat was released on Xbox 360 and PS3, but it isn't backwards compatible on their modern equivalents so you'd need those specific systems to play it.

UNDERCOVER AD 2025 KEI

Year	2000
Publisher	Pulse Interactive
Developer	Pulse Interactive

KEI SAMEJIMA IS a police detective whose boyfriend, a fellow cop, dies in an explosion after responding to a terrorist attack (well, that's what happens when you merge your work life wih your love life, I suppose). Kei decides to go on an undercover mission to avenge her blown up beau.

The game is a third-person action adventure game set in three main areas: City Hotel (a high-rise typical of modern-day Tokyo), Bay Area (a port town with an old-school feel) and Water Town (a large entertainment area with casino boats). The gameplay flits between action and stealth as Kei takes down her enemies while trying to recover her own lost memories. ■

FACT

Japanese publication *Dreamcast Magazine* noted that 'undercover' work is supposed to mean working from the inside without detection, but the enemies here attack you from the beginning.

US SHENMUE

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega AM2

USUALLY WHEN A game or anime is made in Japan, a number of westerners insist on wanting to play or watch it with its original Japanese voiceover, for the sake of authenticity. US Shenmue is an odd example of the opposite. Released in Japan to celebrate 1 million sales of Shenmue, this is basically the western version of Shenmue, with the English language voiceover replacing the original Japanese one. Players can have either English or Japanese subtitles, and Ryo's notebook can be viewed in either language too, but other than this it's pretty much the US release. It's a particularly odd decision given how comically rubbish the English dub was for Shenmue. ■

FACT

Before Shenmue was released Sega gave out a promo disc called What's Shenmue. This was a playable demo in which Ryo chases Sega managing director Hidekau Yukawa to find out more about the game.

UTAU: TUMBLING DICE

Year	2004
Publisher	Ecole
Developer	Reindeer

THIS VISUAL NOVEL puts you in the role of Tatsumi Aikawa, who's a ronin student (which means he's graduated from school but has failed to get into a university or college, and so is studying outside of the school system for next year). Tatsumi gets into huge debt while trying to help a dying old man, and ends up managing a karaoke club which is also home to the man's three endearing granddaughters. It's up to you, then, to not only do the usual visual novel routine of trying to build a relationship with the girls, but to also properly manage the club and attempt to increase earnings by setting their work schedules and figuring out new promotion campaigns. ■

FACT

Two of the girls in this game have what's known as an 'ahoge', which is a single lock of hair sticking up. It's used in manga and anime art to make a character look cute and ditzy.

VAMPIRE CHRONICLE FOR MATCHING SERVICE

Year	2000
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom

WHILE THE OTHER Matching Service titles were ports of older arcade games with a few tweaks here and there, Vampire Chronicle is a sort of 'complete' version of the Darkstalkers series up until that point, similar to what Capcom did with Hyper Street Fighter II. What this basically means is that every character from Darkstalkers, Night Warriors, Vampire Savior, Vampire Hunter 2 and Vampire Savior 2 is available to choose from, as well as the specific fighting styles from each of those games (so if you think Darkstalkers Morrigan is better than Vampire Hunter 2 Felicia you can prove it). Naturally, the other selling point is the titular access to Matching Service, which is no longer relevant today but at the time offered online multiplayer. ■

FACT

Pro fighting game players dismiss this as a competitive game because it uses the Vampire Saviors 2 base, meaning old characters have to use the more modern hitboxes and damage stats.

VERMILION DESERT

Year	1999
Publisher	Riverhillsoft
Developer	Riverhillsoft

THIS IS A curious strategy war game where planning ahead is of the utmost importance. Before each of its missions, you're given a detailed description of its background and are then taken to a Strategy Edit screen where you not only choose your squad and their equipment but also essentially plan their entire route: where to go, how fast they should get there and what they should do once they're there. You then start the mission and watch as your soldiers execute the plan you set for them. This obviously leads to situations where things don't go as expected and you can change tactics on the fly, but this is very much a game where getting the initial strategy right pays of greatly. ■

FACT

Riverhillsoft was founded in 1982 and specialised in PC games, but dabbled in consoles. It brought ports of Prince of Persia to the PC Engine and NEC PC-9801, making it popular in Japan.

VIRTUA COP 2

Year	2000
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega AM2

ALTHOUGH NORTH AMERICAN players were able to get hold of a Dreamcast port of Virtua Cop 2 via the Sega Smash Pack (see earlier in this book), the fact it was only released in that region meant that Sega had to give its popular arcade light gun shooter its own standalone release in Japan. The game's three stages are your typical shooting gallery fare, but this time there are moments where you get to choose between two routes, taking the game in a literal different direction. As with the Smash Pack version, it appears to be loosely based on the PC port of the game, but with improved textures. Annoyingly, Europe had to do without getting a port at all. ■

FACT

Europeans got their revenge a couple of years later when Virtua Cop Elite Edition, which contained enhanced ports of Virtua Cop 1 and 2, came to the PS2 in Japan and Europe but not America.

VISUAL PARK

Year 2000
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega / CRI / PictureIQ

THE DREAMEYE WAS a digital camera peripheral released for the Dreamcast in limited numbers in Japan. Players could take photos using the included digital camera, then connect it to their Dreamcast. The hardware included a single piece of software, named Visual Park, which was designed to introduce players to 'the world of visual networking'. You could use this software to send your photos to people, or even record video and audio (using an included microphone) and send that over too. Somewhat impressively, it even allowed for video calls, which in 2000 must have felt like proper *Star Trek* stuff, even if the picture quality was probably closer to a bootleg VHS of the *Star Wars* Holiday Special. ■

FACT

Although other software was planned for the Dreameye, Visual Park would end up being the only disc to support it. We barely knew ye.

WEAKNESS HERO TORAUMAN DC

Year 2002
Publisher NEC Interchannel
Developer Fortyfive

DESIGNED TO PLAY like an anime series – the game is split into eight episodes, each with its own opening intro and 'next episode' preview – this bizarre visual novel has you actually playing as the villain: a high school student who's also an evil leader of a secret society trying to take over Japan. Standing in your way are the Torauman, a group of fighting schoolgirls. You have to defeat each Torauman: not by fighting them directly, but by interacting with them at school to find out their personal traumas and using these to create a monster called a MixMan who fights on your behalf. Regrettably, if you win you then get to 'search' (i.e. grope) the girl to try and find a bioweapon. ■

FACT

You can still romance the girls if you want, but in a fun touch this is considered a failure of sorts, because it means you can't find their traumas and defeat them in battle.

WEB MYSTERY: YOCHIMU WO MIRU NEKO

Year 1999
Publisher Mebius
Developer Mebius

THIS FMV ADVENTURE opens with a chap checking his emails at an internet cafe and coming across a link to a website called Cat's Eyes: Dog's Message, which shows him footage of a murder. The rest of the game is essentially a visual novel with frequent FMV clips, all told via the medium of a PC web browser and email software. It's a clever way of doing things, predating the likes of the game Her Story and the movie Unfriended by more than a decade and a half, but although the idea of playing a game from the viewpoint of your PC screen may seem rife with possibilities, it's very much designed to force you down a set path, essentially turning it into an interactive movie. ■

FACT

The game's designer, Hajime Kimura, went on to write his own novelisation of the game, also called *Yochimu wo Miru Neko* (which roughly means Predictive Dream Cat).

WIND: A BREATH OF HEART

Year 2003
Publisher Alchemist
Developer HuneX

HOW ABOUT A visual novel where the girls you're trying to romance have super powers? That's the twist in Wind, which tells the story of Makoto, a high school student who returns to his home city and is reunited with his childhood friend Minamo. When they were younger, both had promised to meet again and get married, but that can wait: it turns out the city has not only been home to a bunch of murders, but a number of its residents also have special powers. Even Minamo does: she can control the wind, hence the title. This means you're not only picking one of five girls to romance, you're also taking their powers into account (be that creating shockwaves, curing wounds or the like). ■

FACT

A limited edition version of the game was released exactly one year later, containing a bonus drama CD and a little stand-up cardboard figure of Minamo.

WINNING POST 4 PROGRAM 2000

Year	2000
Publisher	Koei
Developer	Koei

EVER SINCE ITS inception in 1993, the Winning Post series has always been about one thing: becoming a successful racehorse owner. While other horse racing series have you actually taking part in races, Winning Post focuses entirely on the behind-the-scenes side of things. While the series had mainly involved Japanese racing until this point, the fourth entry places a greater emphasis on international races, with more than 400 races from all over the world. You can also import foreign stallions or set up your own overseas stable, while a new breeding system has you trying to create the ultimate racehorse offspring by continuing the bloodline of your existing prize runners. ■

FACT

To date, the only Winning Post game to ever be released in the west was Winning Post EX on the Saturn, which was simply renamed Winning Post for North America.

WORLD NEVERLAND 2 PLUS: PLUTO KYOUWAKOKU MONOGATARI

Year	2000
Publisher	Riverhillsoft
Developer	Riverhillsoft

THE SEQUEL TO World Neverland follows the same basic principles, though now it's set in a maritime nation called the Pluto Republic. Most of the changes are based on the location itself: because it's now a republic rather than a kingdom you can try to be elected as part of the council. Because it's located near the sea it's also more of a multi-ethnic nation, with characters of various skin, hair and eye colours (which can be passed down to your children). And if you've become too attached to your Olerud character, you can get a password from that game and enter it in the sequel to emigrate them to Pluto. ■

FACT

Because emigration uses a password system, players who owned the first game on PlayStation or PC could still carry their character over to the Dreamcast sequel.

WORLD NEVERLAND PLUS: ORURUDO OUKOKU MONOGATARI

Year	1999
Publisher	Riverhillsoft
Developer	Riverhillsoft

THIS CHARMING LITTLE life sim has you playing as a resident of the kingdom of Olerud (the title translates to The Olerud Kingdom Stories). While there, you can live your life however you see fit: you can get a job, take part in martial arts competitions, fall in love and get married, even have kids and take control of them to continue the game when you eventually grow old and die. The 'Plus' in the title refers to the fact that the Dreamcast version adds online features not found in the previously released PlayStation one: a new Kingdom Communication Station lets you interact with other players online (including those you've never met before). ■

FACT

The game's developers say they were inspired by horse racing game Derby Stallion, and the way you could pass your 'hero' (i.e. horse) down to the next generation through breeding.

YOSHIA NO OKA DE NEKORONDE...

Year	2001
Publisher	Naxat Soft
Developer	Mesa

IN THIS VISUAL novel, the protagonist Mamoru used to be a successful ghostwriter working for his uncle until he lost his ability to write good stories. In an attempt to find some inspiration he takes a trip to Kichia Hill, a travel destination with a hot springs resort. There he meets seven potential romantic partners, ranging from the signboard girl of the coffee shop near the resort, to an international student who's staying at the same resort as him. While the game is your standard visual novel for the most part, it makes use of a system called 'cross-link', where you can play multiple scenarios at the same time by predicting how more than one girl will act going forwards. ■

FACT

This is one of the shorter visual novels on Dreamcast, with reports saying every scenario can be cleared in around four hours. It's not generally considered a great game, though.

YU SUZUKI GAME WORKS VOL 1

Year	2001
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Aspect / Sega AM2

GAME WORKS WAS a 132-page book released to celebrate the games designed by Shenmue creator Yu Suzuki. As well as a general look at Suzuki's work, the book focuses on five games in particular – Hang-On, Space Harrier, Out Run, After Burner and Power Drift – giving an in-depth look at their development.

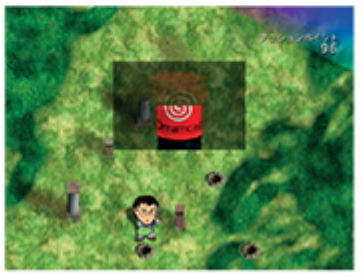
Reading is one thing but the proof is in the playing, so the book also came with an exclusive Dreamcast disc featuring all five games (though with After Burner II replacing the original), allowing players to read up on Suzuki's creations then try them out for themselves. Four of the five games were already in Shenmue but this was the only way to play Power Drift on Dreamcast. ■

FACT

Power Drift was re-released on the 3DS in 2015. The Japanese version lets you race as other Sega characters including Alex Kidd and Axel from Streets of Rage.

YUKAWA MOTOSENMU NO OKATARA SAGASHI

Year	1999
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega



THE TRANSLATED TITLE of this limited-release game (given away with some Dreamcast consoles) is Former Managing Director Yukawa's Treasure Hunt, and is oddly accurate. Playing as Sega's former managing director Hidekazu Yukawa, players wander around a 2D environment, digging around in search of pieces that make up six-panel jigsaws. Yukawa can only dig 100 times, and the idea was that when you were done if you had completed any jigsaws you could submit them online and win actual Sega merchandise. Naturally, this is no longer possible, meaning you're left with an extremely basic mini-game. It does, however, let you copy a mini-game to your VMU which gives you extra digs so it's not entirely without merit. ■

FACT

Yukawa became the face off the Dreamcast in Japan, appearing in TV ads where he defended it against kids who said PlayStation was better. He passed away in 2022.

YUKIGATARI

Year	2002
Publisher	Takuyo
Developer	Takuyo

SOME VISUAL NOVELS seem incapable of just cutting to the chase and giving their players what they're clearly looking for: the ability to chat up some girls. Yukigatari seemingly starts off with that simplicity in mind: you play as Takashi, a high school student whose class goes on a skiing course. While learning how to ski, Takashi naturally finds himself in the company of numerous girls, some of whom fancy getting a bit cosy. You'd be forgiven for thinking that this was all there was to this one, and for some that may be enough, but then the story can't resist chucking in some mythological bumf about the legend of a 'snow woman', who may be in the mountain somewhere. ■

FACT

The Dreamcast version removes the PC version's explicit scenes (as is always the case) but adds new scenarios and updates the artwork to make up for it.

YUKYU GENSOKYOKU 3: PERPETUAL BLUE

Year	1999
Publisher	Media Works
Developer	Starlight Marry

THE PREVIOUS GAMES in the Yukyu Gensokyoku (Eternal Fantasy) series were released on the Saturn, but this one features an entirely new setting and characters so you don't need to know the earlier entries to play this (though you do probably need to know Japanese). You play as Lucid, who's just graduated from security school. Lucid was looking to get a job with the violent crimes department, but on joining the security bureau it's discovered he has magical powers and is made the leader of a new department specialising in paranormal crimes. The game is part RPG, part AVG visual novel, as you regularly talk to the people in your party to keep them happy. ■

FACT

In Japan, there's usually a distinction between more linear visual novels and AVGs (which incorporate other types of gameplay), whereas in the west they're all generally just called visual novels.

YUME BAKEN '99 INTERNET

Year 1999
Publisher Shangri-La
Developer Shangri-La

WOULDN'T IT BE great if you had a time machine so you could watch horse races ahead of time, then go back and bet on them to guarantee winning? Well, you can't. Back in late 1999, though, Dreamcast owners at least had Yume Baken, which let them connect online and (for a fee) download lists of upcoming real-life horse races and use historical data to play out a simulation of the race in order to predict the winner. You could even manually add things like weather, track condition or jockey to further tweak the accuracy of the simulation. If you owned both this and JRA PAT for Dreamcast (which let you make bets online) it was guaranteed money. Almost certainly. Probably not. ■

FACT

The game claimed to have 'unrivalled accuracy compared to other forecasting software'. Given that the monthly subscription meant you were down ¥1,500 ($10) right away, you'd hope so.

YUME NO TSUBASA: FATE OF HEART

Year 2001
Publisher Kid
Developer Kid

HOW ABOUT ONE more visual novel for the road before this book comes to a close? Naoto dreams of flying in his dad's biplane and has spent years restoring it and getting a licence to fly it. After performing a test run, however, Naoto spots a girl lying on the runway. The girl is called Shizuku, and Naoto's never seen her before in his life, but he decides to let her live with him anyway because apparently that's the rule when someone collapses in front of your plane. Shizuku's presence also affects Yuki, Naoto's childhood friend who has a bit of a thing for him. She needn't worry, because Shizuku is actually an angel there to save Naoto from a deadly fate. ■

FACT

The Fate of Heart subtitle refers to the exclusive Dreamcast content, which includes extra scenarios for each character.

ZERO GUNNER 2

Year 2001
Publisher Psikyo
Developer Psikyo

ZERO GUNNER WAS a Sega Model 2 arcade game developed by shoot 'em up studio Psikyo, but it never got a home release. Its sequel was created for Sega's Naomi arcade system, and since that's as close to Dreamcast hardware as you can get, players actually got a home port this time. The game lets you pick from one of three helicopters, each with their own firing pattern, but the main gimmick is the fact that both the screen and the shots can move in any direction. Rather than simply scrolling vertically each stage moves in a variety of directions, and you can also rotate your helicopter within a full 360 circumference to shoot the enemies coming at you from all angles.

FACT

In 2018 the game was released on Switch as Zero Gunner 2-. The dash signified that it wasn't a direct port: since the original data was missing, it had to be rebuilt almost from scratch.

ZUSAR VASAR

Year 2000
Publisher Real Vision
Developer Real Vision

YOU'VE MANAGED TO make it to the end of the Japanese games section, so here's a crazy one to finish things off. Zusar Vasar is a racing game, except your vehicle is an armoured car called a Steel Sledge and it's being pulled by a pair of animal robots called Double Steeds. In order to win on the game's 21 different tracks, you have to find the right combination of vehicle and robo-beasts (be that robo-horses, robo-birds or even robo-kangaroos) that works for your particular racing style. Races are also split into land, air and sea events, adding some variety to the mix. In reality though, the true robot kangaroo was the friends you made along the way. ■

FACT

The game's producer Jiro Aoyama says the animal idea came from him walking his dogs and being pulled along by them, claiming 'the sensation was interesting'.

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The Dreamcast Encyclopedia is the fifth book in Scottish author and games journalist Chris Scullion's critically-acclaimed series of video game encyclopedias. The Sega Dreamcast is fondly remembered by players as a games console that was ahead of its time, almost to a fault. Its incredible graphics offered a level of detail that hadn't been seen on home systems to that point, and its built-in modem brought online multiplayer to many console players for the first time ever. Ultimately though, the release of the PS2 (and later the GameCube and Xbox) led to struggling sales and Sega would eventually pull the plug on the Dreamcast just two years into its life, bowing out of the console manufacturing business altogether. On paper the Dreamcast was a commercial failure, but those who owned one remember it so fondly that for many it remains one of the greatest games consoles of all time, with a small but well-formed library of high-quality games. This book contains every one of those games, including not only the entire western library of around 270 titles, but also the 340 or so games that were exclusively released in Japan. With over 600 games covered in total, screenshots for every title and a light-hearted writing style designed for an entertaining read, *The Dreamcast Encyclopedia* is the definitive guide to one of the most underrated gaming systems of all time.

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